

April 16, 2025

I am writing to support passage and funding for Oregon house bill HB3173. Establishes the OregonFlora Program at Oregon State University.

I would like to share some personal history with the project and to express my support for full funding and implementation of the bill.

I am a life-long Oregonian. I became interested in botany while attending Lane Community College and the University of Oregon. I then went on to a thirty-five-year career as a professional botanist with the U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the U.S. Forest Service (USFS). I am now retired and would like to share how my reliance on the OregonFlora project is typical for federal government botanists (and many other professional and amateur botanists).

When I was in college in the early 1980's in Eugene, there was an annual meeting where both professional and amateur botanists gathered to share their latest knowledge on the locations and conditions and threats to rare plants around the state. This was all before personal computers. After each meeting notes were compiled and shared with participants.

In the 1990's, at the beginning of the Oregon Flora project, volunteers around the state were assigned "blocks" of areas to collect species lists of the plants in each area. Over the next 30 years this has developed into a comprehensive on-line resource for photos, ecology, range maps, herbarium specimens, and gardening information. This project has evolved and taken full advantage of the emergence of computerized databases and internet access for all.

For my work with the federal government, I routinely used the OregonFlora interface to get the latest plant names, habitat information, and range maps. I recently helped review and provide information for rare plants for the Blue Mountains (Malheur, Umatilla and Wallowa-Whitman) National Forest plan revisions. OregonFlora provided critical information that will be used to help forest managers determine how to better manage national forests. Another important user is invasive plant managers. Current information is essential to help control weeds across the state. State, County, private consultants, and amateur botanists all find this resource to be essential.

Much of the OregonFlora work has been done by volunteers and students. However, there are many administrative, data management, project planning, and public coordination jobs that require paid staff. The project relies heavily on donations and grants. This bill will allow OregonFlora's 31 year-investment in data management and sharing to continue, providing uninterrupted support for its stakeholders across government, businesses, education, and residents statewide.

In the past, the Oregon and Washington offices of the Federal BLM and U.S. Forest Service have contributed substantial financial support. **Given the current assault on federal employees and science, your support for this resource is even more critical. It is highly likely that future Federal support will not be available.**

**Please pass and fund HB3173 to support the OregonFlora project. The plants and I thank you.**

*Paula J. Brooks*