Oregon Environmental Council

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Testimony to the Senate Natural Resources and Wildfire Committee
re: SB 1541

February 5, 2026

Ben Brint, Senior Climate Program Director
Oregon Environmental Council

Founded in 1968, the Oregon Environmental Council (OEC) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, membership-based organization. We advance equitable, innovative, and collaborative solutions to Oregon's environmental challenges for today and future generations.

Re: Oregon Environmental Council <u>support</u> for SB 1541

Chair Golden, Vice-Chair Nash, and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of Oregon Environmental Council and our thousands of members throughout the state, I write in strong support of SB 1541. This legislation establishes the Climate Superfund Cost Recovery Program as an interagency response to the extreme and ongoing effects of climate change due to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. By creating a Climate Superfund Cost Recovery Program Account, modeled on the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA), it aims to recover the costs of climate-related damages from January 1, 1995, to December 31, 2024.

Climate change is a complex issue exacerbated by decades of GHG emissions that have significantly impacted Oregon and its counties' economy, community development, agriculture, infrastructure, and other sectors. Extreme weather events that previously occurred once in 100 years could become annual occurrences by the end of this century, and the true cost of damage is expected to be ten times higher for communities with a high social vulnerability index when accounting for health risks, lost wages, decreased productivity, and reduced economic activities.[1]

Over 40% of Oregon's total climate-related disaster costs since 1980 are due to proliferated greenhouse gas emissions that have occurred in just the last five years (2020–2024).[2] According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) National Centers for Environmental Information (NCEI) Billion-Dollar Disaster database and recent findings from the Forum on Oregon Climate Economics (FORCE), the total economic toll on Oregon from climate-related disasters during this period exceeds $15 billion (CPI adjusted to 2024/2025 dollars). Additionally, research suggests that climate change may reduce Oregon's gross domestic product by $7,500 per Oregonian per year.

Between 1995 and 2024, $35 billion in climate disaster costs can be attributed to four major winter or severe storms, 15 droughts, 14 wildfires, and two massive floods in Oregon. The total inflation (CPI)-adjusted cost due to these events is $306 billion (~$10 billion/year). These disaster events claimed 1702 Oregonian lives (Table 1, Chart 1).

Though the climate-related impacts are widespread across Oregon counties, their exposure, severity, and frequency vary by geography. Using several counties (Lane, Marion, and Wallowa) that Senate Natural Resources and Wildfire Committee members represent highlights these variances.

For example, coastal regions like Lane County are more vulnerable and will experience increased flooding, ocean acidification, and heavy precipitation. It is estimated that wildfire smoke could cost Lane County $180 million per year in liability and an expected annual liability of $622 million per year from catastrophic flooding. Lane County has a social vulnerability index (SVI) of 0.7375 indicating medium to high vulnerability. Communities in Lane County lack the necessary resources to prepare for and recover from these compounded climate disasters.

For land-locked counties like Marion County, the impacts of climate change are multifaceted, involving wildfire smoke, extreme heat waves, the urban island heat effects, and an increasing number of hot days.

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[1] The Economic Costs of Climate Change for Oregonians: A First Look
[2] National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) National Centers for Environmental Information (NCEI) Billion-Dollar Disaster database

These factors contribute to a rising energy burden per household and claim vulnerable lives. As the top agricultural revenue-producing county in Oregon, Marion faces an increased risk of frequent drought due to low summer soil moisture and reduced runoff – the probability of which is likely compounded by extreme heat waves and increased GHG emissions. Reports from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) indicate that extreme heat events (like the 2021 heat dome) can result in 40% up to 100% crop loss. Marion County will expect a loss of $174.926 million per year in agricultural revenue due to heat and drought, and $114.183 million per year due to wildfire smoke.

Wallowa County is situated in northeastern Oregon. Defined by high-elevation topography (the Wallowa Mountains), the region is vulnerable to reduced snowpacks, rising temperatures, and shifting streamflow. These shifts lead to significant water scarcity, threatening agricultural revenue and aquatic life. It is projected that these issues will be aggravated by frequent drought events, intensifying the frequency of wildfires across the county's dense forests and heightening exposure to wildfire smoke. It is estimated that the indirect liability cost incurred by households due to wildfire (homes destroyed, wages lost) is $13 million per year, while wildfire smoke accounts for $6.5 million per year. Furthermore, extreme heat events will increase the number of hot days, leading to higher mortality rates and significant energy burdens across sectors. The expected monetary stress on agriculture (primarily livestock, forage, and grains) is estimated at $8.5 million per year - a substantial figure for a county with a total population of roughly 7,500 residents.

For these reasons, Oregon Environmental Council and our thousands of members throughout the state urge you to support SB 1541. Please reach out if we can provide additional information on the data cited in our comments and in the Appendix attached.

Sincerely,

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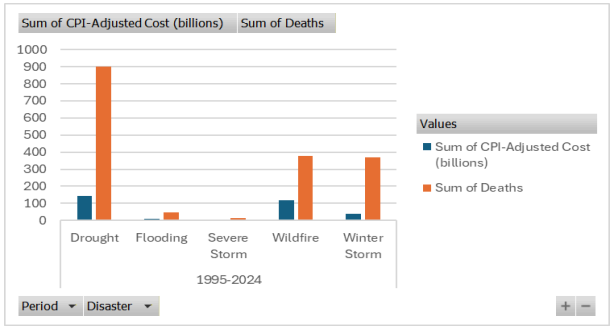
Appendix

Table 1: **Oregon Climate-related Damage Cost** (1995-2024) [3]

Row Labels	Sum of CPI-Adjusted Cost (billions)	Sum of Deaths
1995-2024	**306.3047**	**1702**
Drought	141.1322	900
Flooding	8.0305	45
Severe Storm	1.473	12
Wildfire	117.7703	376
Winter Storm	37.8987	369
Grand Total	**306.3047**	**1702**

Chart 1: Representation of Table 1

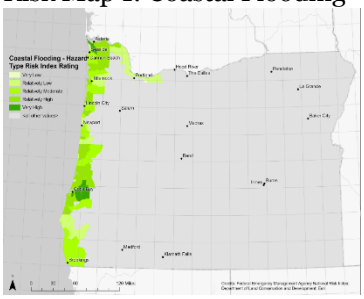


Lane County Climate Liability Estimation[4]:

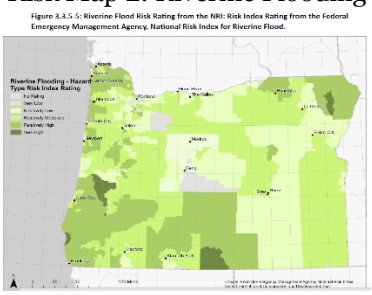
Table 2: Calculation Methodology

Hazard Category	Estimated Annualized Liability / Event Cost
Wildfire Smoke	No. of households*No. of days impacted resulting in high level AQI * the economic multiplier of $450 per household/day = 160,445×2.5×$450=$180.5 Million/year (180,500,625) (hidden health/productivity)
Major Flooding	Using 15% Depth -damage function on the median home value for 6% of the properties at risk as per DOGAMI -FEMA data = (0.15*$430,600) * (160,445*.06) = $621.788553 million/year

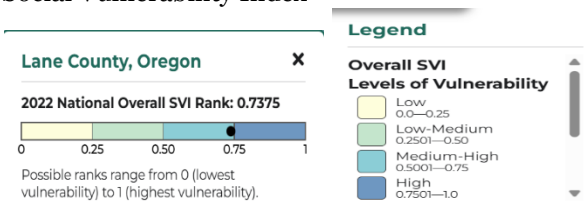
Risk Map 1: Coastal Flooding



Risk Map 2: Riverine Flooding



Social Vulnerability Index



Marion County Climate Liability Estimation[5]:

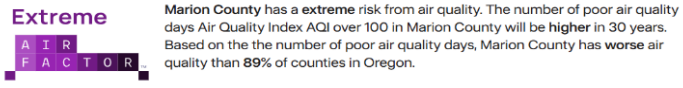


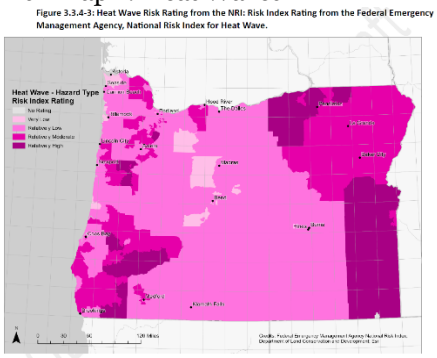
Table 3: Calculation Methodology

Hazard Category	Estimated Annualized Liability / Event Cost
Wildfire Smoke	No. of households*No. of days impacted resulting in high level AQI * the economic multiplier of $450 per household/day = 126,870×2.0×$450= $114.183 Million/year

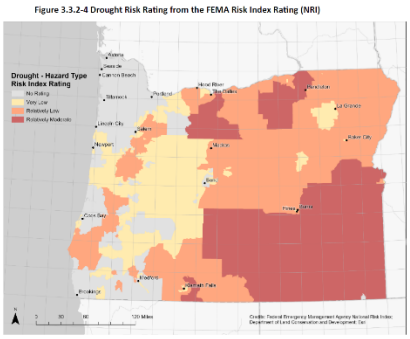
[3] Oregon Cumulative Billion-dollar Cost
[4] Lane Flood Risk
[5] Marion AQI

Drought -Heat: Agricultural Loss	Assuming a 20% systemic decline in yield (YOY) = Agricultural revenue*0.20 = $874.63 million×0.20=$174.926 Million/year$174.926 Million/year

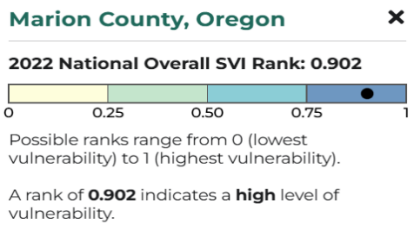
Risk Map 1: Heat Waves



Risk Map 2: Drought



Social Vulnerability Index



Wallowa County
Climate Liability Estimation:[6]

Wallowa County has a severe risk from air quality. The number of poor air quality days Air Quality Index AQI over 100 in Wallowa County will be higher in 30 years. Based on the the number of poor air quality days, Wallowa County has worse air quality than 71% of counties in Oregon.

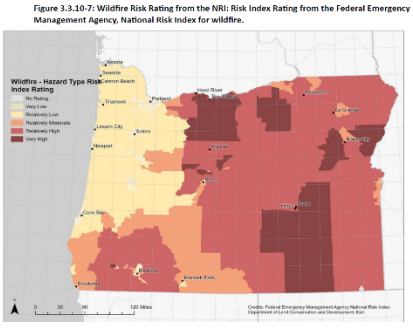
There are 8,680 properties properties in Wallowa County that have some risk of being affected by wildfire over the next 30 years. This represents 99% of all properties in Wallowa County.

In addition to damaging properties, wildfire can also cut off access to utilities, emergency services, impact evacuation routes, and may impact the overall economic well-being of an area. Overall, Wallowa County has a major risk of wildfire over the next 30 years. This is based on the level of risk the properties face rather than the proportion of properties with risk.

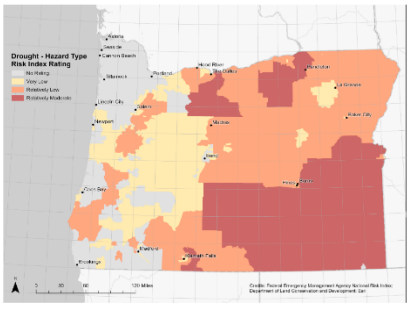
Table 4: Calculation Methodology

Hazard Category	Estimated Annualized Liability / Event Cost
Wildfire Indirect Cost	No. of households*Economic Multiplier $3,900 (The estimated cost per household for wildfire suppression and recovery, Force report) = 3,387*$3,900 = $13.2 Million/year
Wildfire Suppression Cost	Total costs = Percentage of acreage burned in Wallowa*Total statewide suppression cost = (8,801/1,937,512) *317.5 Million - $1.442219 Million/year
Wildfire Smoke	No. of households*No. of days impacted resulting in high level AQI * the economic multiplier of $450 per household/day = 3,387*4.2 *450 = $6.4 million/year (hidden health/productivity)
Agricultural Loss	Assuming a 20% systemic decline in yield (YOY) = Agricultural revenue*0.20 = $42943000*20% $8.588600 (~$8.6) million/year
Extreme Heat	Value of a statistical life (VSL) * excess death = $10 million*0.3 = $3 million/year

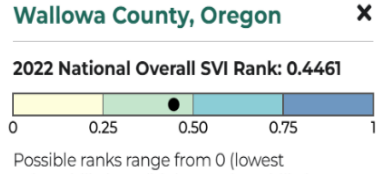
Risk Map 1: Wildfires



Risk Map 2: Drought



Social Vulnerability Index



[6] Wallowa AQI, Wallowa Wildfire Risk