

Testimony of Brad Chalfant, Executive Director of the Deschutes Land Trust
Before the Joint Committee on Carbon Reduction
Bend, Oregon, March 2, 2019

RE: HB-2020

Cap and Invest Legislation

My name is Brad Chalfant and I'm the Executive Director for the Deschutes Land Trust. The Deschutes Land Trust is a private non-profit conservation organization serving private landowners throughout the Deschutes River Basin. We work exclusively with private landowners on a voluntary basis, with a mission is to conserve land for wildlife, scenic views and local communities. However, our work is being undermined by Climate Change.

Climate Change is having a powerful impact on the communities and the lands of Central Oregon, be it through increased wildfire, shorter winters, reduced snowpack, hotter summers, less predictable streamflow, increased algal blooms, fish kills... the list goes on and on. The economic costs of Climate Change are huge and getting larger. Today, the causes of climate change have been firmly established and the solutions are well known.

Oregon, like every jurisdiction has a duty to help solve this global disaster. HB-2020, while undoubtedly an imperfect bill, is an important step toward taking responsibility for the Climate disaster we are handing to our children. The Deschutes Land Trust applauds Oregon's legislature for taking on this most important and daunting threat to our way of life.

That said, we urge the Joint Committee on Carbon Reduction to consider making two changes to HB-2020. First, we urge the Committee to give special attention and consideration to our rural communities and rural economies. Climate Change is expected to have the greatest impacts on rural communities, particularly those with limited financial and institutional resources. HB-2020, like nearly all carbon reduction legislation is intended to raise the cost of fossil fuels to encourage the use of alternatives, yet most rural communities and economies lack the transportation alternatives of urban areas and economies. Consequently, it's important that this legislation pay close attention to funding solutions to address the resilience of our rural communities. Don't continue to leave rural Oregon behind.

Secondly, HB-2020 should dedicate not less than 40% of the Climate Investment Fund in natural and working lands conservation and management. It's well established that the most cost effective means of sequestering carbon and other Greenhouse Gases is through better management of working lands — our farms, rangeland and forests, as well as through the protection and careful management of our natural lands, be they forests, wetlands and grasslands. With 30 million acres of forests and over 16 million acres of farmland, we have a remarkable ability to sequester carbon and other Greenhouse Gases at very reasonable cost. Doing so will also serve to invest in and strengthen our rural economies.

Climate Change isn't some far off, theoretical challenge. Climate Change is impacting our quality of life and our economy today. The science is well established and kicking the can down the road, will only make this an even greater disaster. The only real question is whether our children and grandchildren will look back on this time with pride knowing we did our part or with contempt because we failed to act.

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