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## Oregon Progressive Party

### Position on Bills at 2021 Session of Oregon Legislature:

Dear Committee: **SB 541: Oppose, due to ambiguity**

The Oregon Progressive Party opposes this bill due to its ambiguity. It states:

The Legislative Assembly declares that it is the policy of this state to include atmospheric carbon sequestered by the lands and waters of this state, including Oregon's forests, desert lands and territorial sea, in any calculation to determine progress towards the greenhouse gas emissions reduction goals established by this section.

It is not clear whether this language would:

- (1) consider the existing carbon sequestration in Oregon's forests/lands/seas as an offset to a carbon reduction goal or
- (2) consider only future changes to the carbon sequestration in Oregon's forests/lands/seas as an offset to a carbon reduction goal.

For example, Oregon's current carbon dioxide equivalent (CO<sub>2</sub>e) emissions are about 65 million metric tons per year. The current goal is to reduce that to 14 million metric tons by 2050. The Oregon Global Warming Commission's 2018 Forest Carbon Accounting Project Report stated:

Since the early 1990s, Oregon's publicly- and privately-owned forests in aggregate appear to have been removing from the atmosphere and storing between 23 million (short) tons and 63 million tons of CO<sub>2</sub>e (Harmon 2018a) on average every year (total carbon removed from atmosphere via photosynthesis, less carbon respiration back to the atmosphere, less carbon lost to harvest and to disease, insect predation and wildfire combustion). If only live tree carbon is counted, the annual forest carbon gain from atmospheric exchange is about 38 million tons to 40 million tons (Harmon 2018a).

Under Alternative (1), Oregon could be said to already have met about 3/4 of its 2050 goal (40 million tons already achieved of the desired 51 million ton reduction). Under Alternative (2), Oregon's existing forests are considered part of the status quo, and only future increases in forest carbon sequestration would be counted toward Oregon's goal.



If SB 541 is interpreted as Alternative (1), then it is a wholesale abrogation of Oregon's commitment to combat global warming. If it is interpreted as Alternative (2), then it is reasonable, provided that the additional sequestration is reliably measurable and permanent--both of which are subject to question (see testimony of Ron Bunch and Erica Fleishman). We support the position of Angus Duncan that the forests should achieve carbon reduction goals separate from those already set for the other sectors of the economy.

## Oregon Progressive Party

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