



Joint Committee On Ways and Means, Subcommittee On Natural Resources  
Oregon State Capitol  
900 Court Street NE  
Salem, Oregon 97301

April 21, 2021

Co-chairs Taylor and Reardon and members of the Committee:

I am providing testimony on behalf of the Oregon Climate and Agriculture Network (OrCAN), to express our strong support for, and request your support for, several programs, projects and positions which should be included in Oregon Department of Agriculture's (ODA) budget in [SB 5502](#).

OrCAN's mission is to advance climate resilience on farms in Oregon through collaboration, education, and policy advocacy. We work with farmers, researchers, technical assistance providers, non-profits, and policy makers to promote, improve, and better understand farming for climate resilience in Oregon.

The following programs, projects and positions will help ODA and our state achieve its new climate change mitigation and GHG reduction goals and will promote carbon sequestration on Oregon's agricultural lands:

- 1) **Secure funding for ODA's requested [Soil Health Position \(POP 365\)](#)** which would provide in-house expertise at ODA to improve soil health on Oregon's agricultural lands. This new Soil Health position at ODA would:
  - a) Support implementation of ODA's climate change plan which was drafted in response to the Governor's Climate Action Plan (EO 20-04);
  - b) Advance Oregon agricultural practices that promote soil health through education, technical assistance and coordination;
  - c) Pursue funding from agency partners to support more widespread adoption of soil health practices;
  - d) Recommend additional policies and programs in Oregon to support soil health, using other state policies as models; and
  - e) Collaborate on research to understand Oregon's soil carbon sequestration rates and how various practices can promote carbon sequestration and climate resilience.

Our understanding is that [Soil Health Position \(POP 365\)](#), will likely be funded with federal support for the next biennium, so it would be included in ODA's budget as a federally funded position and therefore eliminates the need to fund that \$225,000 from the general fund for the 21-23 biennium. Only the revenue and expenditure authorizations are necessary for federal funds to be received in the current budget.

- 2) **Fund ODA's requested [Soil Health Baseline Assessment \(POP 370\)](#)** which would improve ODA's understanding of Oregon's agricultural soil health, which will help the state accomplish the baseline assessment of soil carbon levels mandated in Executive Order 20-04. The Agency has requested \$225,000 from the General Fund, which was included in the Governor's Recommended Budget. The baseline assessment will include soils' ability to hold water, soil compaction levels, carbon stored in the soil, and soil pH. This assessment could help inform how partner organizations such as Soil and Water Conservation Districts prioritize outreach, technical assistance, and funding to support those strategies. It will prioritize areas of soil health to focus on in outreach, education, and policy development efforts. And it could help farmers and ranchers access offset programs and other incentives developed as part of a Climate Protection Program or other federal incentive programs.
- 3) **Provide additional funding in ODA's budget for the agency to coordinate with other agencies and engage stakeholders and develop a strategic "Climate Mitigation and Resiliency Plan for Oregon Agriculture,"** which would propose goals, policies and implementation measures for ODA's work related to climate change mitigation. The Plan should be aligned with the proposal related to carbon sequestration on natural and working lands, currently being developed by the Oregon Global Warming Commission (OGWC), but there is additional work needed. A Mitigation and Resiliency Plan is needed for Oregon Agriculture to address the current and future impacts of climate change to assure viability of Oregon's farms and ranches. Work on the Plan should begin soon and must include broad stakeholder and community engagement, and as well as intergovernmental and agency coordination. Approximately \$225,000-250,000 is recommended for this work over the 21-23 biennium, which would either 1) provide funding for ODA to participate in a process led by [Oregon Solutions](#), or 2) provide funding for a limited duration position within the agency over 18 months.
- 4) **Fund the Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) position** in Package 090 for the biennium at \$202,000. The SWCD position at ODA will provide an interface with District programs, leveraging implementation to carry out ODA functions through the technical assistance of districts and their staffs. Among other things, the position will support landowners in implementing soil health and regenerative agriculture practices with the potential to mitigate climate change and sequester carbon in the soil. With this support, the districts will be able to carry out technical work on the ground for climate programs, multiplying efforts on private lands throughout the state.

Please prioritize these programs, projects and positions in [SB 5502](#), ODA's budget bill.

Thank you for your consideration and your service.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Megan Kemple". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Megan Kemple, Co-Director  
Oregon Climate and Agriculture Network