



February 2, 2021

Dear Chair Lively and Members of the House Economic Recovery and Prosperity Committee,

On behalf of Audubon Society of Portland and our 17,000 members, I would like to express our strong support for House Bill 2518 which establishes a program to make forgivable loans to reimburse private owners or operators of brownfields for eligible costs incurred in completion of removal or remedial action at brownfields.

Audubon is a member of the Oregon Brownfields Coalition and is supportive of the coalition's efforts to develop strategies to promote cleanup of brownfields across Oregon. A 2015 Report from ECONorthwest found that there are more than 21,000 acres of brownfields in Oregon and that they can be found in virtually every community in the state. These sites threaten public health and the environment and constrain land supply.<sup>1</sup> It is clear that we need to develop innovative mechanisms to get brownfields back into productive use. We believe, based on the research and work done by the Oregon Brownfields Coalition, that forgivable loans can be an effective tool for this purpose.

We approach brownfield legislation cautiously. Audubon is a strong believer in the "polluter pays" principle. We support HB 2518 because we believe it has reasonable safeguards in place including relatively small limits on loans, exclusions for parties that responsible for the release of contaminants, exclusions for parties that are liable under the CERCLA National priorities list (NPL), and inclusion of incentives for projects that will result in significant community benefits.

We do believe that HB 2518 could be improved and we encourage you to consider the following:

1. Add an incentive related to hiring of woman and minority owned businesses to conduct work covered by this program. This impacts of brownfields have a disproportionate impact on underserved communities. The economic benefits related to cleanup should be targeted towards uplifting those communities.
2. Remove the incentive related to retaining land in industrial use. Maintaining the current land use designation is a remarkably low bar for an incentive and does not necessarily provide a community benefit.
3. Review the incentive related to creating electric car charging stations. Is there a deficit for such stations such that a \$125,000 incentive is appropriate?

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<sup>1</sup> ECONorthwest, Brownfields in Oregon: Characterization and Assessment, February 2015.

4. Add language to ensure that small property owners will have a fair shot at applying for these loans. We are concerned that larger, better resourced corporations will have an unfair advantage in the application process. Including language designating different loan programs for different sized applicants would help ensure that a significant portion of the program is targeted towards smaller owners and operators that most need the support.

We urge you to keep HB 2518 advancing toward passage and look forward to working to working with the Oregon Brownfields Coalition to strengthen it as it advances.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bob Sallinger". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

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