May 28, 2024

To: Senate Committee on Rules

From: The Coalition of Oregon Land Trusts

RE: Support for the Appointment of Sara O'Brien as Executive Director of the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board

Chair Lieber, Vice-Chair Knopp, and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Coalition of Oregon Land Trusts (COLT), we would like to share our strong support for the appointment of Sara O'Brien as the new Executive Director of the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB). As a dedicated advocate for conservation and community engagement, Sara O'Brien brings the leadership qualities, expertise, and vision necessary to effectively steward Oregon's natural resources as the Executive Director of OWEB.

The Coalition of Oregon Land Trusts (COLT) is a network of 31 organizations working to protect Oregon's natural world - our water, wildlife, and open spaces - for all people, forever. Together, our statewide community of land trusts, soil and water conservation districts (SWCDs), and conservation organizations have protected more than 290,000 acres of land. Our land trust community works in close partnership with OWEB to protect and restore habitat, build climate resilience in our communities, and advance the goals of the Oregon Conservation Strategy.

As our state tackles the challenges of mitigating climate change, OWEB is a critical funding partner for our members to implement large-scale conservation and restoration projects on the ground with community buy-in and support. Sara is uniquely positioned to take these challenges head on. As the Executive Director of the Willamette Partnership, Sara brings to this position years of experience in collaborative governance, building partnerships with a wide variety of

public and private entities to increase access to the outdoors, protect working landscapes, elevate marginalized voices, and restore native oak habitats in the Willamette Valley.

OWEB itself is at a critical moment. The agency has expanded its focus and programs to include protection of drinking watersheds, administration of funds for the Natural and Working Lands Fund, and protection of working landscapes through the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program (OAHP). OWEB is in need of a leader with a bold vision to steward the agency as it expands its services and impact in the protection and restoration of Oregon's natural resources.

Our coalition wholeheartedly supports Sara O'Brien's appointment to lead the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board. She possesses a rare combination of technical expertise, collaborative leadership skills, and passion for community engagement that will enable OWEB to achieve meaningful and lasting impacts across our state.

Thank you for the time and opportunity to testify in support of the Sara's appointment. We look forward to working in partnership to ensure lasting impacts for OWEB investments across Oregon.

Sincerely,

Amanda Martino
Board President
Coalition of Oregon Land Trusts