Recht testimony (slides submitted separately)

First Slide

Thank you Chair Golden and Members of the Committee for this opportunity to talk to you.

My name is Fran Recht. I manage the habitat program at the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission where I work with many collaborative groups including watershed councils and forest and estuary partnerships to further restoration work that benefits marine fish such as salmon. I also am on the Depoe Bay City Council where one of our focuses is on protecting our watershed to help keep good water quality and flow in a warming climate. Though I bring these experiences with me, I am speaking as an individual, not representing the City or Pacific States

What I have to say about restoration is going to be very familiar to you, but with the carbon focus adding an important additional benefit to this work.

Second Slide

Many of you know the work of the 55 watershed councils and 45 soil and water conservation districts in communities throughout the state- and that they apply for funding, much of it from Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, to help *landowners* help salmon and steelhead, water quality and watershed health.

Third slide

This means projects like streamside planting, floodplain reconnection, modifying dikes and re-establishing tidal channels, putting logs in streams, installing bridges or larger culverts to help salmon migrate upstream, installing fencing and watering systems for livestock, controlling erosion and invasive species, and other projects.

Fourth Slide

This also means funding going for backhoe and excavator operators, log haulers, bridge and culvert installers, crews to control weeds and plant native trees, nursery managers, engineers to design projects, scientists and biologists to measure effects, and staff to plan, manage, fund and implement the projects…. And of course, bookkeepers to keep track of it all.

Fifth Slide

In fact, a lot of jobs, both direct and indirect, ranging, depending on type of work, from 14.7 jobs per million invested to 21.1 jobs, with most work generated within the same county and most all from Oregon, according to a study from U. of Oregon. Additionally for each million dollars invested by the state, an additionaly $1.48 M was leveraged from federal and state programs, private non-profits and other sources.

Sixth Slide

On the coast groups have been working to restore wetlands for many years and we've seen results—often quite immediate for fish and wildlife. –Here's a great example: in a 55 acre tidal restoration project I was helping with a few years ago just upstream of Toledo, Oregon, we had just finished up the dike removal and channel construction when a coho juvenile jumped right in front of us, already using the new channel it hadn't had access to before.

Seventh Slide

Tidal wetlands are havens and supply rich food that help juvenile salmon, crabs and other important species which in turn land up supporting our fishermen, processors, retailers, and the tourism sector.

Eight Slide

We also expect to see marsh vegetation re-establish quickly as well as the beginning of re-establishment of the shrub and spruce swamps that once were common on the coast, but that are all but gone (about 90% lost). These marshes and swamp plants can store significant amounts of carbon in their roots and above ground, called "blue carbon" as you'll hear about from Craig Cornu next.

Ninth Slide

There are also other benefits we expect to see for flood impact reduction now that flood waters can spread out onto the marsh instead of being confined to the river channel. We also expect to see more sediment settling out onto the marsh surface, helping to improve water quality downstream, but also helping accrete sediment that will help the marsh adapt to sea level rise and maintain these benefits over time.

Here's another example, this one from Tillamook County: the Tillamook Flow Corridor project was a $11.7M, 443 acre tidal marsh habitat restoration project completed in 2017 that was designed primarily for the co-benefits of salmon habitat and storm surge and flood buffering, but also anticipating carbon storage. Oregon State University studied the socio-economic effects of the project in 2021, 4 years after the project was completed.

Among perhaps other more expected things, they found that this work enhanced home values. They found that homes within three-quarters of a mile of the restoration site increased in value by 10%, or an average of $19,000, compared to homes further away. Modeling estimates the total benefit of the project on housing values to be approximately $19.1 million dollars.

Next Slide·

With passage of SB 530, state agencies and local coastal communities and communities throughout the state will have more opportunities for restoration work including by leveraging federal funding for carbon enhancing restoration projects that also will continue to have multiple other co-benefits for all of us.

Thank you for your time, Chair Golden and Members of the Committee