

February 14, 2023

Dear Senators Golden, Girod, Prozanski, Smith, and Taylor,

I strongly urge you to do whatever you can to make sure that Senate Bill 530 makes its way to the floor for a vote. Although carbon sequestration is not a panacea to challenges posed by the climate crisis, it will be an essential tool for removing carbon from the atmosphere as we move into the future. Elements of this bill will also have significant benefits for Oregon's environment and economy.

Regenerative agriculture and forestry practices proposed in this bill can enhance production and reduce costs for farmers and foresters. This is a point that needs to be communicated to residents of rural counties throughout the state. S 530 is a way to overcome Oregon's urban-rural divide around climate issues, especially if you and your colleagues in the legislature consider steps that need to be taken to make a transition to regenerative agricultural and forestry possible.

The creation of a state bank (HB 2763) could be an important part of this process if it were to adopt lending practices that recognize the fact that increased earnings will not appear automatically when farmers adopt strategies like no-till and cover cropping or foresters lengthen logging rotations. Oregonians responsible for implementing these changes must not be expected to take untenable financial risks, and terms associated with loans made to people who work the land must take this into consideration. Incentives, by themselves, seem unlikely to do this.

It will also be important to make use of early adopters of these approaches to educate their more skeptical peers. Doing so has worked in the Midwest with regard to regenerative farming practices and could potentially make a difference here. Former State Forestry Board member Peter Hayes has already been holding workshops on climate-friendly forestry practices to good effect. The implementation of S-530 would benefit significantly from a well-conceived educational component.

Finally, in addition to the adoption of regenerative agriculture and forestry approaches, we need to protect intact wetlands, forests, rangeland, and estuaries as well as restoring no longer productive but damaged lands to a healthier state.

Senate Bill 530, if adopted and well-implemented, could be among the most important accomplishments of the current legislative session and serve as a model for other states around the nation.

Sincerely yours,

Gregory Smith, PhD