

Senate Committee on Natural Resources
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court St. NE
Salem Oregon 97301

February 15, 2023

RE: Please Support SB 530

Chair Golden, Vice-Chair Girod, members of the Committee,

Oregon Environmental Council (OEC) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, membership-based organization that for over 50 years has worked to advance innovative, equitable, and lasting solutions to Oregon's environmental challenges. We are pleased to support SB 530, the Natural Climate Solutions bill.

As members of this committee know all too well, healthy forests, waters, and agricultural lands are vital to Oregon's economy, culture, and way of life. Unfortunately, the beauty and bounty of Oregon's cherished natural resources—and the people, communities, and local economies that depend on them—face unprecedented threats. Climate-fueled wildfires, drought, and extreme temperatures threaten to deplete Oregon's water supply, destroy farm and forestlands, and devastate lives and livelihoods of Oregonians across the state. The legislature has a key opportunity this session to protect Oregon farmers, ranchers, forest owners, and entire communities against current and future climate harms, by supporting SB 530.

As the Committee has heard in supportive testimony from ranchers, farmers, and forestland owners across Oregon, this legislation is a win-win for the climate and for Oregon land managers. By creating a source of state funding for voluntary actions to sequester climate pollution and store it in natural and working lands, SB 530 will both fight climate change and help protect Oregon's natural resources. That's because land management practices that enhance carbon sequestration—such as cover crop planting, wetland restoration, or lengthened logging rotations—also provide important co-benefits, including improved soil health and productivity, wildfire and drought resilience, fish and wildlife habitat, reduced risk of flooding, and clean and abundant drinking water.

It should therefore come as no surprise that SB 530 has been endorsed by more than 100 organizations, including local elected officials, environmental justice, business, climate, and conservation groups, and more than 50 farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners from across the state. Moreover, this legislation is responsive to pleas from industry and decision-makers alike over the years, who have pushed for the state to invest in natural climate solutions. As one

example, during the Environmental Quality Commission's consideration of the Climate Protection Program, Commissioner and Oregon Farm Bureau Executive Director, Greg Addington, expressed disappointment that the program did not include funding for carbon sequestration on agricultural and forest lands.

Natural climate solutions are key to achieving net zero emissions by no later than 2050, which is what the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has concluded is necessary to avoid irreversible catastrophic climate impacts. In order to achieve our climate goals, Oregon must reduce greenhouse gas emissions, while also supporting natural processes that draw down atmospheric carbon concentrations that have been building for more than 150 years.

Recognizing the vital role of healthy forests, waters, and agricultural lands in ensuring a resilient climate future, the recent federal Inflation Reduction Act included roughly \$30 billion dollars in climate-smart land management incentives. However, maximizing the full economic and climate potential of these investments will depend in large part on whether the legislature acts strategically this session to position Oregon for success.

By creating a state fund to support forest owners, farmers, and ranchers who wish to implement natural climate solutions on their lands, SB 530 will be key to ensuring Oregon is well-positioned to harness these unprecedented investments, reward the stewardship of Oregon's farmers, ranchers, and forestland owners, and ensure that communities with the greatest need can benefit from these funds.

By creating a state Natural Climate Solutions fund to support incentives and technical support to forest owners, farmers, and ranchers who wish to implement natural climate solutions on their lands, this bill will help advance carbon sequestration, improve climate resiliency on our forests, agricultural lands, and wetlands, and support a vibrant natural resource economy.

For these reasons, OEC respectfully urges you to vote yes on SB 530 and make it a priority to pass this legislation this session.

Thank you for your consideration,

Nora Apter
Climate Program Director
Oregon Environmental Council