The Nature Conservancy
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Senate Committee on Natural Resources

Testimony in support of SB 530: Natural Climate Solutions

Submitted by: Laura Tabor, Climate Action Director

Chair Golden, Vice-Chair Girod, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB 530. The Nature Conservancy in Oregon (TNC) is a non-partisan, science-based organization that works in communities across the state, manages lands and waters in varied ecosystems, and partners with ranchers, farmers, fishers, timber, and environmental interests on some of the most challenging conservation issues facing people and nature. Effective management of Oregon's natural and working lands is a critical component of our state's overall response to climate mitigation and adaptation.

As landowners and managers of over 148,000 acres in Oregon, TNC recognizes the need to adapt our practices to help mitigate and prepare for changing conditions and are working to do so. We, along with over 100 other endorsing organizations, strongly support this bill. It offers meaningful action recognizing the important role natural climate solutions have to play in greenhouse gas mitigation and improving resilience. We want to emphasize the following factors driving our support:

Science supports prioritizing natural climate solutions in addition to reducing fossil fuel emissions. Scientific literature on the climate mitigation and adaptation benefits of natural climate solutions is accumulating rapidly and supports prioritizing these activities in addition to reducing fossil fuel emissions. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has identified that even if global economies successfully eliminate economy-wide fossil fuel emissions, additional carbon sequestration is necessary to limit global temperature rise to 1.5C or less and avoid the worst impacts of climate change. Oregon's natural and working lands present a critical opportunity to increase the removal of greenhouse gases from the atmosphere and reduce emissions from activities on natural and working lands through proactive management and restoration. Recent analyses of biological carbon sequestration and storage opportunities in Oregon highlighted the potential for natural climate solutions to provide significant carbon benefits that could move Oregon significantly closer to net-zero emissions if we also meet our emissions reduction goals—a both-and, not an either-or.[i]

Co-benefits strengthen the case for natural climate solutions. Natural climate solutions can also promote community resilience through a wide range of benefits. For example, restoration and reforestation of floodplains sequesters and stores carbon while attenuating flooding and reducing risk to communities. Scientists have high confidence that actions such as managing land and forests sustainably can lead to more productive lands at lower risk of degradation, even in the face of challenging climate

conditions. These improvements translate directly into short and long-term community benefits locally and across ecosystems.[ii] These examples underscore the importance of SB 530's focus on establishing activity-based and community impact metrics to track multiple benefit streams from natural climate solutions over time.

Support for Oregon's farmlands, ranches, and forests can't wait. It is imperative Oregon act quickly to invest in technical assistance and incentives to help land owners and managers implement natural climate solutions. Project development takes time and some restoration work can take years to mature and reach its full carbon sequestration and storage potential. Decisive action now to create structure, direction, and funding for this work will ensure these strategies make timely and important contributions. Farmers, ranchers, and foresters are already seeing their narrow profit margins squeezed by extreme temperatures, wildfire, drought, and flooding. It's time to invest in supporting healthier soils, forests, wetlands, and coastal areas to increase net earnings, improve fish and wildlife habitats, and provide flood protection while sequestering and storing carbon.

An Oregon NWL greenhouse gas inventory is a necessary foundation for strategic progress. We support dedicating resources to a state-specific, comprehensive natural and working lands greenhouse gas inventory. While existing data clearly demonstrates there is broad potential for NWL to contribute to climate mitigation, current inventory methods are not sufficient to draw detailed conclusions about the baseline carbon storage and sequestration within NWL sub-sectors or to track changes in carbon storage and sequestration in NWL in response to changing management and climate. As the effects of climate change further stress ecosystems across Oregon, we need comprehensive process-based models which incorporate anthropogenic land-use trends, natural disturbances, and climate change projections to better understand how NWL in Oregon may serve as a carbon sink into the future.

SB 530 will enable those who own and manage land to scale up voluntary natural climate solutions statewide, making our lands and waters healthier and more resilient to the benefit of those who steward them and for all in Oregon.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this important legislation. We strongly urge your support of SB 530 and moving this bill forward.

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[i] Graves RA, Haugo RD, Holz A, Nielsen-Pincus M, Jones A, Kellogg B, et al. 2020. Potential greenhouse gas reductions from Natural Climate Solutions in Oregon, USA. PLoS One. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0230424

[ii] IPCC, 2019: Climate Change and Land: an IPCC special report on climate change, desertification, land degradation, sustainable land management, food security, and greenhouse gas fluxes in terrestrial ecosystems [P.R. Shukla, J. Skea, E. Calvo Buendia, V. Masson-Delmotte, H.-O. Pörtner, D. C. Roberts, P. Zhai, R. Slade, S. Connors, R. van Diemen, M. Ferrat, E. Haughey, S. Luz, S. Neogi, M. Pathak, J. Petzold, J. Portugal Pereira, P. Vyas, E. Huntley, K. Kissick, M. Belkacemi, J. Malley, (eds.)]. p. 21 https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2019/11/SRCCL-Full-Report-Compiled-191128.pdf