



Oregon State
University

**College of Earth, Ocean, and Atmospheric
Sciences**

Oregon State University
104 CEOAS Administration Building
Corvallis, Oregon 97331-5503
(541) 737-3504
ceoas.oregonstate.edu

26 April 2023

Senator Elizabeth Steiner and Representative Tawna Sanchez
Co-chairs, Joint Committee on Ways and Means

Dear Senator Steiner, Representative Sanchez, and Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments in support of proposed SB 5506's policy option package 104, which enables the Columbia River Gorge Commission's continued collaboration with local communities, Tribes, and other diverse partners to build resilience to climate change.

I serve as director of the Oregon Climate Change Research Institute (OCCRI), which is hosted by Oregon State University (OSU). OCCRI facilitates research across Oregon's public universities on climate change and its effects on Oregon's natural and human systems; serves as a trusted source of information to the public; and assist local and state governments, industry, and other partners in their efforts to mitigate and adapt to climate change and associated natural hazards.

OCCRI is working with the Columbia River Gorge Commission and OSU Extension Service to develop Climate Stewards, an education and service program that builds on the success of initiatives such as Master Gardener. We will launch Climate Stewards in autumn 2023 with a pilot project focused on the Gorge. The pilot will enhance participants' ability to address five elements of the Commission's Climate Change Action Plan: regional transport and transit, fire risk, carbon storage on agricultural lands, oak woodlands, and cold refuge streams and riparian habitats. By extension, the pilot will facilitate protection of livelihoods, cultural identities, and scenic, natural, cultural, and recreational resources throughout the Gorge. Continued staff capacity is essential to the success of the pilot and to OSU Extension's subsequent ability to expand the program throughout the state.

Equal funding for the Columbia River Gorge Commission is contributed by Oregon and Washington; the lower of the two state budgets is matched by the other state. Washington has approved a budget that is \$360,000 greater than the current budget under consideration in Oregon. If Oregon does not match Washington's budget, Washington must reduce its contribution, and the Commission's capacity to serve both states will diminish. In contrast, by matching Washington's budget, Oregon will support equitable climate adaptation by communities throughout the Gorge and beyond. Therefore, I encourage you to support the policy option package. Thank you again.

Sincerely,

Erica Fleishman

Erica Fleishman, Ph.D.
Director, Oregon Climate Change Research Institute
Professor, College of Earth, Ocean, and Atmospheric Sciences
erica.fleishman@oregonstate.edu