



Willamette Valley Chapter
Native Plant Society of Oregon

Chair Helm, Vice-Chair Hartman, Vice-Chair Owens, Members of the Committee on Agriculture Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water,

I am John Savage. I am the President of the Willamette Valley (Salem) Chapter of the Native Plant Society of Oregon. The Willamette Valley Chapter is one of 11 chapters of the Oregon Native Plant Society. Our mission is to promote the conservation, study, and enjoyment of Oregon's native plants and habitats.

The Willamette Valley Chapter of the Native Plant Society of Oregon urges your support for HB 3173.

The Oregon Flora Project provides comprehensive, accessible, and continuously updated data about all of Oregon's vascular plants - native and non-native – on an easy-to-navigate website. In the past year alone, there were an estimated 738,000 website pageviews.

For 30 years, the Oregon Flora Project has relied on grants and donations to fund its operations. Such funding is inherently erratic and unstable. As a result, at times, the Oregon Flora Project has had to scale back operations and face the threat of closure. It is time to provide permanent, stable state funding for the Flora Project.

For our local chapter, the Oregon Flora Project is our go-to resource for all botanical information for our field trips, educational programs, classes, and restoration projects. Here is one small example of its use as an educational resource to foster science literacy in our children. Our chapter sponsored an "It's Easy Being Green" native plant summer camp, a weeklong camp for underserved elementary school students. We used the Oregon Flora Project as our guide to help the kids identify native and non-native plants; read plant distribution maps; learn about the critical role native plants play in our economy and the environment; learn about ethnobotany; and undertake projects to inventory plant species, remove invasive species and create a native plant garden.

More broadly, providing permanent and stable state funding for the Oregon Flora Project will yield benefits to the state that will far exceed the costs. It is simply a smart investment for Oregon. The benefits of state funding of the Oregon Flora Project include:

- Identifying rare plant habitats that inform habitat protection measures and help direct conservation budgets toward the most at-risk species and ecosystems.
- Fostering more effective control of invasive species threatening rangelands and agricultural fields.
- Supporting Oregon agriculture by providing information to bolster pollinator numbers and corridors.

- Helping Oregon nurseries increase sales of native plants and develop new species to cultivate and market.
- Providing up-to-date best practices plant science information to help respond to wildfire threats and the effects of climate change.
- Supporting rural economies through fees, lodging, food, and other services by encouraging visitors to explore lesser-known wildflower spots.

In short, the Oregon Flora Project is a foundational resource that merits state funding.

Thank for your consideration of this testimony and thank you for your service to Oregonians.