

Submitter: Sandy and Bryce Halonen

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3173

We are writing to support HB 3173, which is needed to support OregonFlora as an integral funded part of Oregon State University.

We write as owners/stewards of a 41 acre property in rural south Benton County, which we purchased in 1979 and lived on since 1986. We purchased the property because of its beauty, hill top terrain, and diversity of trees, understory, and native wildflowers and grasses. Over the years, we have seen the plant mixture change, as Douglas firs overtopped the madrones and oaks. In 2020, we were finally able to begin a concerted effort to restore the property to its original, native oak savanna. In these efforts, we have engaged many public, private, non-profit forestry and native plant professionals from Oregon State University, University of Oregon, Long Tom Watershed Council, and Trout Mountain Forestry. We have learned that they all use OregonFlora for its information and photos about native plants. We ourselves have used it extensively to identify and learn more about the plants we find, and just as important, to identify and control non-native, invasive plants, which would otherwise overtake and crowd out our native species.

Our land is Kalapuya land, but it's difficult to find accurate, comprehensive, and unbiased information about the plants that the Kalapuya valued and used. The upcoming third volume of OregonFlora will do just that. It will fill a critical gap in our understanding and recognition of the natural resources we all have inherited. Here, we have large, heritage oaks (300+ years old) largely preserved because of the Kalapuya's original stewardship of the land, and which we have now taken steps to continue.

OregonFlora is critical to Oregon's future status as a place of natural wonder. And the more we can understand it---whether we are members of the general public, amateurs, or scientists--the more likely that the natural wonders can be communicated and experienced by a broad range of people, and the more likely people will understand their roles in maintaining our unique and complex natural resources.

We personally donate each year to OregonFlora, because we understand the vital role OregonFlora plays. We all want to live in an Oregon that is fire-resistant and resilient to change.

It's time for the State of Oregon to recognize how important OregonFlora is to our state. It would be a shame if OregonFlora's work were to cease, and if these valuable resources were no longer available. And all the extensive resources of OregonFlora are free to the public; this value simply cannot be overestimated.

We urge you to pass HB 3173 to provide OregonFlora with an official, adequately funded home at Oregon State University.