

February 3, 2025

To: House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water

Re: HB 3173 (OregonFlora) - **SUPPORT**

Dear Committee Members:

I am writing in my personal capacity to express strong support for HB3173 to provide stable and sustained funding for the OregonFlora program. I am the curator of the Oregon State University Herbarium and an instructor in the Botany and Plant Pathology department at Oregon State University. OregonFlora plays a major role in both my curation and teaching. Through Oregon State University's Extension service, I am the person tasked with identifying plants for stakeholders all across Oregon: government agencies, farmers, foresters, corporations, researchers, landowners, and the general public. The OregonFlora website and the Flora of Oregon books are critical tools that I use on a daily basis for all aspects of my job.

OregonFlora hosts our herbarium database and provides the behind-the-scenes collections management tools that herbarium workers use daily to digitize, track, and curate our specimens. We make our [herbarium data and specimen images available](#) to the public primarily through OregonFlora's website. OregonFlora's [taxonomic checklist](#), updated annually, is our authority on the correct plant names for species in Oregon, and the basis for our herbarium's organization scheme. We use the [Flora of Oregon books](#) as one of our primary sources for identifying specimens, and look forward to the third volume being completed. Notably, Flora of Oregon is the only state flora published in the last 60 years and is the *only* comprehensive flora that covers the botanically diverse Southwestern Oregon region. Therefore, it is especially important for botanists working in southern Oregon that this final volume is published. Finally, our flora is changing. New species continue to be discovered and described, others may become rare, or expand their range, and potential invasives must be monitored. Thus, it is important that the website and books are kept up-to-date, and we are heavily reliant on OregonFlora to lead this task for us.

OregonFlora resources are a critical tool that I use when identifying plants for Oregon stakeholders. I provide added value to these clients by linking to the [OregonFlora species profile page](#) for the plant that I have identified. All Oregon plant species have these pages, which include distribution maps, field photos, specimen images, native status, and descriptions highlighting how to identify them. Clients tell me that they find these profile pages helpful, and I frequently use them myself to identify a plant; the distribution maps are especially useful to me. Given Oregon's varied ecoregions, the distribution of a species relative to the location where a client observed their plant is often a major determinant in providing an accurate identification, and OregonFlora is the best source of this information. For difficult identifications, based only on clients' photographs, I often rely on OregonFlora's [Identify tool](#) to narrow the list of possible species for a particular location.

As an instructor, I teach the class Flora of the Pacific Northwest, where students learn how to identify plants in our region, training the next generation of field botanists. OregonFlora's website and the Flora of Oregon books are two major tools that inform my students' learning, and they use them both in class and on homework assignments. Students learn how to use the [Identify](#) and [Mapping](#) tools to find and identify plants, and how to download data for their research. Many of these students tell me that they continue to use OregonFlora for other classes and as they graduate and move on to careers in Oregon and the surrounding region.

Currently, OregonFlora is supported by donations and grants and struggles to maintain funding, despite its ubiquitous use in land management, education, research, and conservation. In my view, OregonFlora's tools are too important to the Oregon public to rely wholly on unpredictable funding sources, and by doing so, we risk losing OregonFlora altogether, along with the 30 years of data and expertise that OregonFlora has amassed. What the website and the books provide to Oregonians constitutes our botanical heritage! There is no other source of this information that is as comprehensive and up-to-date, and it would take a career to rebuild this knowledge.

I urge you to support HB3173 to establish a stable funding base for OregonFlora that will allow it to continue this crucial mission to document and share data on Oregon's botanical heritage with Oregon citizens. This is a program with considerable benefits to the Oregon public. These tools and data are crucial for me to do my job, and the same is true for many others working within Oregon's natural resource-based economy, including forestry, botany, agriculture, tourism, and conservation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "James Mickley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Dr. James Mickley
Assistant Professor of Practice (Herbarium Curator) and Instructor
Oregon State University
Corvallis, Oregon