

February 4<sup>th</sup>, 2025

Joint Ways & Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources

Testimony on SB 5528: Department of Land Conservation and Development Budget

Submitted by: Lauren Link, TNC Oregon's State Policy Advisor

---

Co-Chair Frederick, Co-Chair Emerson Levy, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on SB 5528, the budget for the Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development (DLCD) for the 2025-27 biennium.

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) is a science-based, non-partisan organization committed to conserving the lands and waters on which all life depends. In Oregon, TNC has over 80,000 supporters and members in every county. Based in communities around the state, we manage lands and waters in varied ecosystems and partner with ranchers, farmers, fishers, timber and environmental interests on some of the most challenging conservation issues facing people and nature.

TNC works closely with DLCD on a wide variety of conservation issues, from participating in a rulemaking to identify least conflict areas to site solar projects to planning for and implementing coastal restoration projects to investing in community green infrastructure. TNC appreciates DLCD's commitment to protecting natural resources while balancing different land uses.

We acknowledge the agency's increasing portfolio of programs across the state and want to ensure the agency has the staff capacity and resources to do this critical work. We respectfully ask that the following funding be included in the 2025-27 biennial budget:

**We support the following investments within the Governor's Recommended Budget (GRB):**

- **POP 101: Repurpose Community Green Infrastructure Grant Funds.** In 2023, TNC was thrilled to see the creation of the Community Green Infrastructure Program, a program dedicated to increasing capacity for local jurisdictions to plan and fund green infrastructure, such as increasing tree canopy and managing stormwater.

TNC supports the carryover of funds to ensure continuity of the program and supports the need to fund the four program positions to administer the funds.

**We support the following investments not included in the GRB:**

- **POP 4.4: Sustainable Funding and Service Levels for the Oregon Coastal Management Program Positions.** Hosted by DLCD, the Coastal Management Program is a partnership with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to provide funding and technical assistance to protect coastal resources and bolster coastal resilience in local communities.

As federal funding makes up a large portion of program funding, TNC supports state investments into the program to ensure that the program continues to adequately manage its responsibilities and support local coastal communities. Creating sustainable funding for the program increases the agency's ability to manage for a variety of projects that support the economic and ecological health of Oregon's coast, including waterfront development, managing undersea cables, planning for sea level rise, protecting rocky habitats, and more.

- **Funding for community outreach on the Offshore Wind Energy Roadmap RoundTable.** HB 4080 provided funding to DLCD to develop an offshore wind energy roadmap that defines standards to be considered in the process related to offshore wind energy development and approval. DLCD is tasked with conducting robust community engagement and outreach but does not have dedicated funds for travel and outreach-related expenses. TNC supports investments that are dedicated to robust community and Tribal engagement in this process.
- **Funding for Rocky Habitat Coordinator and Eelgrass Taskforce.** TNC is supporting two legislative concepts that add capacity and resources to the agency and increase coastal resilience. We ask the Committee's support in funding the Rocky Habitat Coordinator position within DLCD and the creation of an Eelgrass task force to assess the status of eelgrass in Oregon's estuaries and recommend conservation and restoration state targets.

We thank you for your thoughtful consideration on the DLCD budget and your leadership on Oregon's critical natural resource funding priorities.