

February 3, 2025

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

Re: HB 3173 (Oregon Flora) – Support

Dear Committee members:

I am a research faculty member of the Horticulture Department of Oregon State University and a member of the Native Plant Society in Benton County. I strongly support HB 3173.

Since arriving in Oregon in 2004 I have conducted research for federal and state agencies, including the Umatilla, McNary, Hart Mountain, and Malheur National Wildlife Refuges, as well as surveys for the OR Department of State Lands and State Parks at 8-Dollar Mountain and other state parks. When I first began the work, many of the Oregon Flora tools were not available and I would often spend one or two weeks searching through older studies and several floras that described only portions of the state before I could begin my field studies. Now, with the tools that are on the OR Flora website, I can prepare for similarly scaled projects in a matter of hours, saving considerable time and funding.

The Flora's mapping tool allows me to determine all plants ever collected within a park, wildlife refuge, or other area, so I'm able to visit the site knowing what plants have been found and which plants have been found in surrounding, similar landscapes. Their extensive plant photo collection allows me to become familiar with species before my field search, and also allows me to identify unknown plants that I almost certainly will encounter. OR Floras photo collection exceeds all other online state floras that I have used.

The photos are also useful for gardeners and retail nurseries selling native plants, allowing the gardener to see the size and often the plant in different seasons. OR Flora staff and volunteers have also regularly provided presentations for customers on regional and local native plants that are appropriate for gardeners in different parts of the state.

OR Flora has also provided a section in the on-line flora to assist home gardeners with choosing plants for their garden based on region of the state, soils, drainage, and amount of light available. It has also provided information on the plants available from each nursery.

OR Flora has also developed an App for smart phone – "Oregon Wildflowers" that allows the user to enter information such as flower color, number of petals, type of leaf, and habitat to identify over 1000 unknown wildflowers. The App does not require Internet access, thus allowing it to be used anywhere in the state.

OR Flora plant lists are regularly used by other biologists, especially those studying insect pollinators. Many bees and butterflies feed on only specific plants or plant families, so the Flora is an important tool for their research.

OR Flora has also provided links to other state and federal agencies, as well as NGOs that are resources for plant lovers and biologists. The Flora has become a one-stop information site for those studying, working, or recreating with plants in Oregon.

Almost all of the above products were created through user donations and volunteers – the Flora needs dependable support to continue providing these important tools. I urge you to support House Bill 3173 so that Oregon Flora can continue playing its important role for the citizens of Oregon.