



The League of Women Voters of Oregon, established in 1920, is a grassroots nonpartisan political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government. We envision informed Oregonians participating in a fully accessible, responsive, and transparent government to achieve the common good. LWVOR Legislative Action is based on advocacy positions formed through studies and member consensus. The League never supports or opposes any candidate or political party.

Date: Feb 26, 2025

To: [Co-chairs Senator Lew Frederick, Representative Emerson Levy,](#)

Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Natural Resources

Re: **HB 5039** – OWEB Budget Request for the Natural Working Lands Fund – SUPPORT

The League of Women Voters of Oregon (LWVOR) bases our comments on this National League position: *“The League supports climate goals and policies that are consistent with the best-available climate science to ensure a stable climate system for future generations.”* Furthermore, the League believes that *“a full accounting of all costs, including cumulative ecological impacts of timber harvests and other forest uses must be considered in forest activity decisions.”* This includes planning for future climate impacts for forest resilience and for carbon sequestration and storage so that future generations can meet their own needs [*based on Oregon Revised Statute 184.421*].

The Natural Working Lands Fund established in 2023 implements the 2021 **Climate Change and Carbon Plan** by providing financial and technical assistance to landowners, managers, and community organizations, in order to encourage climate smart practices that mitigate climate change impacts and increase resilience to wildfire and other costly severe climate events. Oregon Water Enhancement Board (OWEB) administers and distributes the fund to 4 natural resource agencies: Oregon Water Enhancement Board (OWEB), Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA), Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW), and Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF).

LWVOR has been a member organization of the Natural Climate Solutions Coalition focused primarily on ODF’s allocations of the Fund since its inception. For example, ODF is using the funds to:

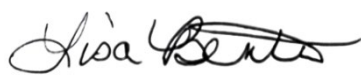
1. Advance the implementation of Climate-Smart Forestry as outlined in ODF’s **Climate Change and Carbon Plan**
2. Incentivize Climate Smart Forestry Implementation in partnership with Tribal and Environmental Justice Communities and
3. Establish climate-ready seed orchards to support small, disadvantaged, and tribal forestry.

To assist with technical assistance for forest owners and managers, ODF stewardship foresters and other forest professionals, a small work group in Washington County has been working with Tualatin Soil and Water Conservation staff on a guidebook for the county to advise on climate smart forestry practices to inform site specific forestry decisions on the ground.

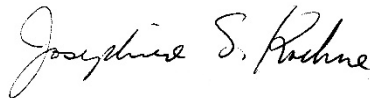
The LWVOR is attending these meetings to help provide a small forest owner's perspective as the guidebook is developed. We believe this guidebook will be very instrumental in incentivizing new climate smart forest management that will help reduce carbon from the atmosphere and improve climate resiliency. The fund is off to a very good start, but continued funding will be essential for technical and financial incentives for forest owners and land managers who will need continued support and practical direction when adapting to these new practices that provide many ecological benefits to all Oregonians. Sustainable ecological services include increasing groundwater supply, preventing erosion, contributing to human health and well-being, and improving soil health and wildlife habitat while cooling nearby communities. This fund will be well worth the investment for future generations.

The clock is ticking and Oregon forests have the greatest potential in the world to draw down atmospheric carbon *worldwide* to slow climate change with its extremely costly damages. Oregon needs to see that actionable beneficial forest policies are put in place to decrease GHG emissions to ensure Oregon does its part to address the climate crisis.

We urge you to support OWEB's \$5 million budget request in HB 5039 to continue the great work of the NWL Fund. Thank you for your consideration.



Lisa Bentson
President LWVOR



Josie Koehne
Forestry Advocate LWVOR



Claudia Keith
Climate Emergency Coordinator

Cc: [Oregon Climate Action Commission](#), Governor Staff: Senior Natural Resources Advisor, [Geoffrey Huntington](#), Natural Resources and Climate Policy Advisor, [Karin Power](#)