



26 February 2025

Dear Co-Chairs Frederick and Levy and members of the
Joint Committee On Ways and Means Natural Resources Subcommittee:

I'm writing on behalf of The Crest at Willow-Witt Ranch, to express our strong support for \$5M in OWEB's budget for renewal of the Natural and Working Lands Fund, which provides incentives and technical support to help landowners, land managers, environmental justice communities, and Tribes adopt practices that support natural climate solutions on Oregon's natural and working lands.

Natural climate solutions have three aims:

- to remove carbon from the atmosphere and store it in our natural and working lands,
- to help increase ecosystem resilience,
- and to maintain or increase human well-being.

OWEB's Program and Fund support Oregon's land ethic, formalized in the 70's, to avoid conversion of forests, farms, and natural areas to maintain a quality of life and landscape that Oregonians love. Because The Crest at Willow-Witt Ranch is located on a 445-acre inholding in the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument, we feel a particular affinity for the important of preserving, restoring, and regenerating our heritage rural and forest lands.

Natural climate solutions take time to establish and will cost more to build in the future. The sooner natural climate solutions are implemented, the more they can help lessen the magnitude of disturbance events and potentially reduce future damages and costs. Investment now contributes to a more secure landscape future.

The Fund is 1-year old and is doing great work, but sustained support creates momentum that moves the work from a start-up phase to an established effort that can start reaping returns on the initial investment. And continuity of funding is also important. When funding is available one year and not the next, interest in the programs decreases, and it becomes difficult for land managers and community organizations to anticipate what will be available and take best advantage of it.

Agency staff have invested time and effort to coordinate and leverage each other. As more staff comes onboard, agencies are gaining efficiencies in how best to conduct community outreach, engage with stakeholders, and implement projects.

On behalf of all the folks served by The Crest at Willow-Witt Ranch, I urge your support for the inclusion of the \$5M investment of the NWL Fund in OWEB's budget for the 2025-2027 biennium.

Thank you,

Paul Sheldon
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(submitted electronically)