

Dear Co-Chair Frederick, Co-Chair Levy and members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments in support of the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board's (OWEB) budget. On behalf of Oregon Shores Conservation Coalition, and our thousands of supporters and members across the state, **we would like to express our strong support for the inclusion of \$5M for the Natural and Working Lands (NWL) Fund in OWEB's budget (Package 090) for the 2025-2027 biennium.**

This fund is an important investment for ensuring Oregon's Natural and Working Lands (NWL) can meaningfully mitigate the impacts of climate change and offset greenhouse gas emissions through carbon sequestration. Given the biodiversity and climate crisis we face in Oregon, investments in Natural Climate Solutions are more critical now than ever.

In particular, I want to highlight the importance of Oregon's estuaries, wetlands, and eelgrass meadows that benefit greatly from these investments. These "blue carbon" coastal habitats sequester more carbon than terrestrial rainforests and are critical in the fight against climate change. It is estimated that a 150 acre estuary can sequester up to 9,000 tonnes of Carbon, equivalent to taking 7,000 cars off the road for one year. The carbon sequestration potential of our coastal habitats needs to be prioritized to help the state meet our climate goals, and many agencies and partners are working to realize this potential.

OWEB is an essential fiscal agent to the NWL fund, which invests in collaborative restoration and conservation projects, facilitated by multiple state agencies and partners all across the coast. This funding is critical to implementing natural climate solution projects in our estuaries and coastal environments. DLCD is also developing Estuary Resilience Action Plans to identify strategic projects, provide capacity, and identify funding sources to facilitate estuary restoration and advance natural climate solutions. In short, many agencies and partners rely on this OWEB funding to implement these projects and capitalize on the benefits offered by our blue carbon habitats.

The restoration projects facilitated by OWEB's NWL fund have added ecosystem benefits beyond carbon sequestration by providing habitat for fish and wildlife, improving water quality, and providing flood and shoreline protection. These benefits are invaluable and provide a high return on investment for the resilience of our coastal communities— who are most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.

We urge you to help retain these critical partnerships and projects on the Oregon coast by supporting the inclusion of the \$5M investment of the NWL Fund in OWEB's budget for the 2025-2027 biennium. Thank you!

Sincerely,  
Annie Merrill  
Marine Conservation Manager  
Oregon Shores Conservation Coalition