

April 14, 2025

Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources

Testimony on SB 5520: Department of Environmental Quality Budget

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Co-Chairs Levy and Frederick and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on Senate Bill 5520, the budget for the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) 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. 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. Addressing climate change by reducing emissions, increasing carbon sequestration, and improving ecosystem and community resilience are top priorities for The Nature Conservancy in Oregon and around the world.

Oregonians treasure our clean air, clean water, and pristine natural environment and DEQ serves a vital function in protecting these natural resources today and for future generations. The agency plays a key role in leading Oregon's efforts to mitigate the effects of the climate crisis while ensuring that all Oregonians have access to clean air and water. TNC supports the state's investments in policies and programs to reduce emissions, advance Oregon's climate goals, and protect nature and communities and urge fully funding the agency budget at the continuing service level.

In addition, we also recommend you prioritize the following funding options, as you consider DEQ's budget for the upcoming biennium:

Support for Oregon's Greenhouse Gas Reporting Program. As Oregon's chief agency responsible for regulating greenhouse gas emissions, DEQ is tasked with collecting and analyzing data, technical assistance, industry outreach, and implementing cornerstone climate programs like the Climate Protection Program (CPP) and Clean Fuels Program. TNC supports **Package 111**, which authorizes an updated fee structure to ensure the agency's capacity to adequately administer and manage the CPP and Clean Fuels Program and to address DEQ's growing responsibilities in GHG reporting. These programs reduce climate pollution while also protecting public health and creating cleaner, cheaper, healthier energy and transportation options that will benefit Oregon families and economy.

Address Critical Resource Gaps. TNC supports **Package 170**, which authorizes new positions and resources needed to address long-standing resource deficiencies and chronic underfunding affecting critical agency services and functions highlighted in a [2024 Secretary of State audit](#). As DEQ continues to take on more programs and responsibilities, the agency will be further strained in its ability to monitor,

protect, and enhance Oregon's environmental quality. This package identifies critical investment areas in resources for laboratory services, emergency preparedness and response, communication and outreach, compliance and enforcement, water quality programming, and climate change programming.

TNC is committed to working with DEQ to ensure the agency has the resources, funding, and staff capacity to work towards meeting Oregon's air, water, and land quality goals. Thank you for the opportunity to express our support and your thoughtful approach to the DEQ budget.