

April 15, 2025

Senator Sollman, Co-Chair
Representative Ruiz, Co-Chair
Joint Committee on Ways and Means
Subcommittee on Education
900 Court St. NE, H-178
Salem, OR, 97301

RE: Support for Institute for Natural Resources

Dear Co-Chairs,

Over the past several decades, I attended graduate school at OSU and remained in Oregon to establish a career as an aquatic ecologist. My professional endeavors throughout this period have been enhanced by INR's dedication to excellence in its legislatively mandated mission to "deliver management-relevant information that informs discussions and decisions about the long-term stewardship of Oregon's natural resources, and works to advance centralized, science-based natural resource information for Oregon and the Pacific Northwest."

In fulfilling this mission, INR maintains a highly diverse portfolio of projects. I have directly experienced many of these as a student, consultant, federal research scientist, and adjunct university faculty member. These differing roles have enabled me to use INR databases and technical products, collaborate with INR staff, and be the beneficiary of outstanding INR science support. To illustrate, I offer just a few of many possible examples.

- Databases and technical products: During development of the Oregon Private Forest Accord in 2020, representatives, including myself, from the conservation and working forest coalitions relied on the vertebrate animal ranks maintained by the Oregon Biodiversity Information Center (ORBIC) to help identify which fish and amphibian species to propose for coverage in the associated Habitat Conservation Plan. To complete that and many other projects, the Oregon Explorer offered me efficiency as a one-stop data shop, compiling and serving numerous high-quality geodatabases. I have also repeatedly turned to and cited INR technical publications as authoritative source material, notable among these is "Trees to Tap: Forest Management and Community Drinking Water" (2021).
- Collaboration: In 2008, the INR initiated and facilitated a project to evaluate the potential for systematic reviews of published research findings to inform best practices in natural resources management. Prior to this, such reviews were common in clinical medicine but novel in other fields. An INR staff member recruited me and another scientist to review the research publications. The three of us developed the review strategy and wrote the final report, "A Pilot Test of Systematic Review Techniques: Evaluating Whether Wood Placements in Streams of the Pacific Northwest Affect Salmonid Abundance, Growth, Survival or Habitat Complexity." This report demonstrated the utility of the approach and led the Oregon

Department of Forestry to undertake other systematic reviews, most recently in 2024 regarding the effects of post-disturbance timber harvest on streams.

- Science support: I serve as a co-chair of the Independent Research and Science Team (IRST), which was established by the Oregon legislature to assist the Board of Forestry in adaptive management decisions. Based on its longevity and stellar reputation, the INR was chosen as the housing agency for the IRST. Since 2023, Dr. Lisa Gaines as INR Director and Dr. Sean Gordon as Forest Landscapes Lead have supplied outstanding facilitation and science support to the IRST. Under their leadership, IRST meetings have run smoothly, achieved objectives, and complied with the Oregon Public Meetings Law. In addition, they have assisted the IRST in hitting milestones on time, including developing our charter, and have been instrumental in collaborating with IRST members to plan, develop, and draft work products.

I do hope these examples help convey INR's invaluable contributions to understanding and managing Oregon's natural resources. Although I realize that some of INR's funding comes from other state and federal sources, the latter is highly uncertain at this moment. Thus, I strongly encourage you to advocate for and fully fund INR, ensuring that their important work on behalf of our state and region continues into the future.

Respectfully,

Kelly M. Burnett

Kelly Burnett, PhD

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April 3, 2025

RE: Letter of support to continue funding Institute for Natural Resources

Dear Senator Kate Lieber and Representative Tawna Sanchez,

My name is Aaron Menconi, and I am a student worker at the Institute for Natural Resources at Portland State University. I am writing in support of continuing state funding for their work.

I started with INR in January 2024, and since then I have gained valuable insights into the field of natural resources and how science can be used in stewardship to Oregon's natural heritage. Oregonians enjoy some of the highest quality natural landscapes in the U.S., and I am grateful to have had the opportunity to contribute so the many visitors can enjoy these natural places for years to come.

In my time working at INR, I've come to also see the economic benefits of their work. I began at INR digitizing physical archives that span the last half century. In that role, I reviewed ecological surveys and reports that at that time formed the basis for establishing the many state parks and natural areas that attract people from all over the world who support our communities that rely on tourism as a significant portion of their economy.

Since completing that digitization project, I have gone on to help with INR's other projects, such as mapping invasive species for the 4-county Cooperative Weed Management Area as well as monitoring wildlife in areas of forest under wildfire fuels treatment. These programs that support federal, state and county partners are made possible through state funding, without which would leave a significant void in support for maintaining Oregon's native natural systems and managing the threat of wildfires for the safety of all Oregonians.

You all have a manifold opportunity to preserve the wealth of knowledge and experience INR's talented scientists bring to bear, protect Oregon's status as a high value destination which supports local economies, and ensure INR can continue training future generations of scientists such as myself and my fellow student workers. You can accomplish all of this at once by voting to continue state funding for INR, and I strongly urge you all to do so.

Thank you for your continued service to the citizens of Oregon.

Sincerely,
Aaron Menconi



Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Education

April 10, 2025

Dear Senator Sollman, Representative Ruiz and members of the committee,

I am writing to describe the value that the Institute for Natural Resources (INR) brings to the SageCon Partnership. Our work supports rangeland communities and ecosystems in Eastern Oregon by providing forums for information exchange and project development to restore working lands and habitats. The technical tools INR produces are the foundation of dozens of grants that bring restoration funds to rural communities, creating jobs and resilient ecosystems. Without INR's translation, vast amounts of data would remain inaccessible to land managers, researchers, and the people who live in these expansive landscapes. The SageCon Landscape Planning Tool is entirely created and maintained by INR and is used as a universal communication tool among federal, state and local agencies for developing projects.

This past summer, we saw the worst fire year in Oregon's history, with 1.8 million acres burned in the eastern part of the state. The planning resources that INR produces are at the core of our ability to quickly organize and secure funding to prioritize work in the burned areas by focusing on places where we can expect to see recovery. Not only does INR develop important tools, their staff are committed to providing support and training to disseminate these tools through workshops, webinars, conference presentations, and local working groups.

The value of our partnership is magnified by our longstanding relationship with INR, and we urge you to maintain funding that supports their work and the health of our rangelands.

Sincerely,

Rachael Davee

SageCon Partnership Coordinator

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