



TO: Joint Committee On Ways and Means--Subcommittee On Natural Resources
FROM: Grace Brahler, Oregon Climate Action Plan & Policy Manager, Beyond Toxics
DATE: May 19, 2021
RE: Senate Bill 5518 (ODF Budget)

Co-Chairs Senator Taylor and Representative Reardon and Members of the Subcommittee,

For the record, my name is Grace Brahler. I am the Oregon Climate Action Plan and Policy Manager for Beyond Toxics, a statewide environmental justice organization advancing policies that ensure meaningful participation and cultivating grassroots leadership from Oregon's frontline and impacted communities. Beyond Toxics is also a co-lead for the Oregon Climate Action Plan Coalition's Natural and Working Lands Tables, engaging at every step of the Executive Order on Climate Action (EO 20-04) implementation process to ensure the strongest possible outcomes for our climate, our communities, and our economy. Thank you for the opportunity to provide these comments on the Oregon Department of Forestry's budget bill, SB 5518.

First, I urge you to support Policy Option Package 160 for Forest Climate Change Mitigation & Adaptation.

ODF needs additional capacity to fully implement the Governor's Executive Order on Climate Action. The agency has been focused on developing its Climate Change Carbon Plan, which is a significant undertaking. This Plan can be used to frame what a future ODF could become: a national leader in climate-smart forestry that actively prioritizes community health and wellbeing. To achieve this vision, however, the agency needs adequate staffing and resources to be able to fully address and respond to the unique needs of communities across the state.

In particular, the agency must have the capacity to engage with and support historically disadvantaged and frontline communities who have and will continue to face the worst impacts of the climate crisis despite being the least equipped to face them. For example, climate change mitigation and adaptation must not only take into account the multitude of forest management practices that have been shown to sequester and store carbon, but also the impacts of heat stress on timber workers and the health consequences of wildfire smoke exposure to nearby communities. Ultimately, if the Climate Change and Carbon Plan is given short shrift, the devastating consequences of moving forward with the status quo will only cost Oregonians more in the long run.

Further, investments should be made in the Urban and Community Forestry Program, which has significant climate justice implications. This program directly supports climate

action and communities in that it ensures urban areas have trees to sequester carbon emissions, filter and retain stormwater, protect healthy streams, mitigate the effects of heat islands, and enhance neighborhoods and property values.

I also urge you to support Policy Option Package 172 which aims to advance Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion at ODF.

The mission of ODF is: “To serve the people of Oregon by protecting, managing, and promoting stewardship of Oregon's forests to enhance environmental, economic, and community sustainability.” Therefore, I echo the agency’s request to create the following three new staff positions to ensure ODF is indeed fulfilling its promise to *all* Oregonians:

- Environmental Justice Coordinator,
- Sustainability Coordinator, and
- Liaison to Tribal Governments Coordinator.

Positions to advance environmental justice and sustainability should be funded in full to meet the needs of the agency and fully implement the directives of the Oregon Climate Action Plan.

Lastly, investments related to wildfire preparedness should focus on community defense instead of distant fuels reduction efforts.

As the threat of the next major wildfire looms over us, ODF has a lot of work to do to make sure communities are prepared. Fires are being driven by extreme weather conditions and fuel load is not always a key factor (especially on the westside temperate rainforests) in how severe and damaging these fires are. Far more effective strategies for saving lives and property include investing in education and outreach efforts around the need for home hardening, defensible space and evacuation planning, especially for disadvantaged communities and those communities who are limited- or non-English-speaking.

Thank you very much for considering my comments and for all the work this Subcommittee is doing.

Sincerely,

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