



PACIFIC FOREST TRUST

Catherine MacDonald  
Commission Chair, Oregon Global Warming Commission

July 22, 2020

Kristen Sheeran  
Climate and Energy Policy Advisor to Governor Kate Brown

**Re: Comments on Natural and Working Lands for July Meeting**

Dear Catherine MacDonald, Kristen Sheeran, and Oregon Global Warming Commissioners,

Pacific Forest Trust (PFT) would like to thank you for providing the opportunity for public comment on the Oregon Global Warming Commission (OGWC)'s July 28<sup>th</sup>, 2020 meeting. PFT is a non-profit active in conserving and enhancing the health and function of Oregon's and California's private forests for 27 years. As you know, healthy forests and lands are critical in both mitigating climate change by sequestering carbon and enhancing resiliency to the consequences of climate change, such as increased prevalence of catastrophic wildfire. With our goals of restoring and conserving Oregon's private forests, we were very pleased to see the upcoming OGWC meeting have a focus on setting goals for enhancing carbon sequestration by Oregon's natural and working lands. We offer the following comments and recommendations as you begin the goal setting process to enhance the state's forests for resiliency and carbon sequestration:

**1. Ensure carbon sequestration goals are consistent with healthy, resilient forests.**

We must utilize the state's forests for carbon sequestration, but we need to ensure that their management is sustainable and consistent with long-term resilience goals. Carbon sequestration goals and implementation should be focused on resilience, adaptation, restoration, and conserving the forestland base. For forest ecosystems, this means managing lands for more natural species compositions and age structures so that forests can achieve higher, more natural levels of carbon sequestration and storage, and also withstand the stressors of climate change. More natural forests, with higher proportions of older and larger trees, wider spacing, and diverse structure and composition are both more stress resistant and resilient, as well as store more carbon. In addition to storing more carbon over time, older forests also yield more timber products. Healthy forests also reduce risk of intense wildfires and their associated uncharacteristic emissions. Further, forest degradation loss, and the carbon emissions associated with it, add to the steep challenge of meeting our climate goals. Forest restoration and conservation will enable us to more successfully and rapidly meet our climate goals.

**2. Maintain the climate benefits of Oregon's land base through improved land use planning and implementation that conserves natural and working lands.**

For forests' climate benefits to be fully realized, restoration and conservation must be implemented at the landscape scale. Forests should not be fragmented by unplanned development and an expanding Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI). To help achieve our land use planning goals and reduce the extent of the WUI, we must actively conserve and promote

healthy and connected forested landscapes. Working Forest Conservation Easements are an excellent, proven, and popular tool to use in order to keep lands from being converted to non-forest uses. These incentive-based tools are widely used in Oregon - they meet both our climate and economic goals, keeping forests in production while managing them for climate and other public and private goals.

**3. Complement the 100-Year Water Vision and coordinate climate improvements through OWEB.**

The actions taken to enhance Oregon's natural and working lands' ability to store more carbon complement the goals in the state Water Vision. The Water Vision includes a variety of principles that could be achieved through actions that would also further land-based sequestration. For example, the Water Vision recognizes that natural systems must be "part of Oregon's water future - both as natural infrastructure that provides clean water for human use, and as the components of a healthy ecosystem for fish and wildlife." Forests that are conserved, restored, and ecologically managed improve both water quality/quantity and increase natural carbon uptake.

The Water Vision also calls for coordination and collaboration among different federal, state, local, and public and private entities in order to "plan and invest strategically." By aligning the state climate and Water Vision goals, investments can be streamlined to achieve multiple goals at once. The Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB), which is already an effective inter-agency body, makes sense as the most appropriate state agency for administering a program and activities for natural and working lands. It can, and should, act as a clearinghouse for these activities and information. Driving improvements through OWEB would be an effective way to facilitate implementation of the state's goals for natural and working lands.

Implementing these recommendations will provide a myriad of co-benefits. They improve climate resilience, water quality and quantity, and wildlife habitat, and provide forest and recreation-based economic opportunities for rural and underserved communities, in addition to increasing net carbon stores. Climate action related to natural and working lands is especially needed in our rural communities which depend on these lands for their livelihoods, and are on the frontlines of climate change. They are threatened by increasing floods, drought, and wildfire. Proper goal-setting must recognize the interconnectedness of our forests, water, climate and communities.

We greatly appreciate all your work and urge you to continue the momentum on climate action. PFT looks forward to engaging further with the Commission in forwarding the Governor's Executive Order and supporting Oregon's natural and working lands for climate resiliency.

Sincerely,



Laurie A. Wayburn  
President