

SUMMARY REPORT



Carbon Pricing and Working Lands in Oregon: Findings and Recommendations from a Stakeholder Convening

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Leadership in Conservation Thought, Policy and Action

1 Executive Summary—Needs and Opportunities Identified

On June 12, 2018, 95 individuals from diverse institutions and affiliations¹ convened for an open dialogue focused on structuring carbon pricing legislation to reduce emissions while supporting a resilient and prosperous Oregon. Convened by the Pinchot Institute for Conservation, this conference offered a forum for presenting research and analysis related to Oregon’s carbon potential, as well as questions and concerns regarding carbon pricing and its effects on communities and working lands. The discussion groups held in the afternoon focused on identifying principles for guiding public investments resulting from pricing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, and notably, opportunities to create co-benefits to emissions reductions in the areas of equity, climate resilience, and conservation. Based on the presentations and discussions occurring at the conference, this summary report, accompanying [background research](#), and meeting presentations offer a framework of information to support the ongoing efforts of the Oregon Carbon Policy Office, administrative agencies, and the work of the Oregon legislature.

SCIENCE AND POLICY UPDATE

- **Dramatic reductions in GHG emissions are needed** in the near future to avoid significant disruptions to Oregon’s working and natural lands. To address climatic shifts already underway, **working lands can benefit from practices that provide joint adaptation and mitigation (JMA) outcomes.**
- Over the next year, the **Joint Legislative Committee on Carbon Reduction and the Carbon Policy Office** will be designing policy for the state. The Oregon legislature is sponsoring three studies: (1) an analysis of carbon in Oregon’s forests and wood products, (2) the effects of carbon pricing on emissions-intensive and trade-exposed industries (EITEs); and (3) broad, statewide macro-economic effects of pricing carbon.
- **Large working groups of the Carbon Policy Office** are focused on: (1) **natural and working lands**, (2) a **low income utility program**, and (3) a **large business advisory group**. Smaller groups include electric utilities and transportation.

IMPACTED COMMUNITIES, RURAL ECONOMY, AND EQUITY

- Conference participants identified their **greatest concern regarding carbon pricing as the potential economic implications for rural communities.**
- **The second most frequently identified concern cited by conference participants relates to social and economic equity for disadvantaged communities** vulnerable to disruptions associated with climate change. This includes people living in all types of communities along the urban-rural gradient.

¹ Participant affiliation: 1% energy industry, 14% government, 3% climate advocacy, 10% academia, 6% environmental justice, 10% agriculture industry, 7% forest industry, 5% forestry, 4% family forest, 7% philanthropy/investment, 3% tribal, 30% conservation NGOs.

- **Many participants voiced a broad concern over the accessibility and efficiency of any new state programs funded through carbon pricing.** Participants experienced in developing projects for California's offset market and climate investment fund voiced frustration over extensive delays and bureaucratic hurdles. These factors can limited participation and the effectiveness of any emergent programs, making them politically vulnerable. Criticism of existing programs in California and Ontario has centered largely around these issues. Ideas for addressing these challenges included: use of existing USDA tools to streamline proposal and project evaluation, use of existing administrative capacity within state departments and locally based soil and water conservation districts (SWCD).
- **Rural communities, agriculture, and impacted communities may be especially sensitive to the effects of climate change and increases in fuel prices.**
- **Impacts of energy and fuel price changes on communities are dependent upon policy details;** e.g. the allocation and/or consignment of allowances, the designation of populations for any rebate programs, as well as, the inclusion or exclusion of industries as emissions intensive and trade exposed (EITE).
- **In the recent cap-and-invest bill, strategies for limiting adverse economic impacts to rural areas and impacted communities focused on:** inclusion of these constituencies in the policy creation and governance processes, allocations of program revenue to disadvantaged communities and working lands, and measures to minimize electric utility rate increases in impacted communities.
- **The treatment of emission allowances is a key concern for environmental justice advocates,** i.e. whether or not they are auctioned by the state or freely allocated to regulated entities, whether offsets are geographically limited, and how to mitigate co-pollutants harmful to human health.
- **An important consideration for policy design is the treatment of forest and farmworkers who are exposed to climate change impacts, and who will be critical to implementing JMA programs.**

One way to address challenges to rural and other impacted communities is through training programs for newly created jobs and incentivizing investment in local small businesses in ways the help reduce their carbon footprint and increase efficiency.

- As an impacted community, **a key question for tribes engaging in the carbon market is whether or not carbon offset revenues are recognized as non-taxable** Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) trust revenue similar to tribal timber.

- **Meeting participants recognized that intergenerational land transfers present both a need and an opportunity to transition operations toward greater climate resilience and mitigation potential.**
 - Opportunities identified include: (1) **expanding the capacity of watershed councils and soil and water conservation districts to provide assistance with transitioning practices toward JMA** approaches during ownership changes, (2) **adjusting programs related to servicing beginning farms, ranchers, and forestland owners to emphasize JMA strategies**, (3) **assisting communities and tribes acquiring industrial timberland** in ownership transitions.

AGRICULTURE

- **Operating on slim margins, farmers could be negatively impacted by increases in energy costs if mitigating measures are not taken.**
- **A range of agricultural practices can improve adaptive capacity, enhance soil carbon storage, and/or reduce farm-related emissions and fuel consumption.**
- **There is a need to complete an analysis of Oregon agriculture related to the potential for adopting JMA practices**, identifying where the largest benefits could accrue on agricultural lands, and what research can contribute to developing JMA strategies for agricultural systems lacking these approaches.
- **Opportunities exist to expand renewable energy installations on farms**, but this should not take precedence over agricultural production, especially on prime soils.
- **Participants recognized the success of organic certification and other marketing initiatives and speculated that a link to climate smart agriculture could be made in a manner that rewards farmers for JMA practices.**
- **The diversity of Oregon agriculture will make developing comprehensive offset protocols challenging.** There is concern that early adopters might not be sufficiently rewarded in the carbon market depending upon how additionality is calculated. Oregon also has many perennial cropping systems (hazelnuts, grapes, etc.) that are generally more carbon rich than annuals. To date, few offset protocols have been developed for such crops.

FORESTRY

- **While California is developing emission reduction goals and implementation plans for its natural and working lands, Oregon has yet to develop such plans.**
- **Moist forests systems west of the Cascade crest are best suited for additional forest carbon storage.** Lands in eastern and southern Oregon could often benefit from a combination of mechanical thinning and prescribed fire to enhance adaptive capacity and long-term carbon retention.
- **Encouraging increased carbon storage with non-industrial landowners through market-based and incentive programs is an immediate opportunity.**
- **Suggestions for making carbon markets inclusive for non-industrial forests include:** examining protocol requirements and streamlining where possible, using technology to reduce inventory and verification expenses, developing a workable protocol for project aggregation with SWCDs and Watershed Councils potentially serving as the aggregating body, and leveraging ODF Stewardship Foresters to assist with monitoring projects.
- **Participants seemed to heavily favor an incentive approach** (direct payments akin to a Farm Bill program) vs. offset markets to improve carbon sequestration on working lands. Participants cited offset project transaction costs and bureaucratic delays in payments as reasons to favor incentive-based approaches.

2 Introduction

Background on the Policy Process

The Clean Energy Jobs Bill (SB 1507) was introduced during the 2017 Oregon legislative session as a means to cap greenhouse gases (GHG) from the state's largest emitters, and to reduce these emissions over time. In addition, the policy identified a range of potential mechanisms to help communities transition to a clean energy economy and increase resilience to anticipated impacts of climate change. The bill also identified opportunities to increase the adaptive capacity and mitigation potential of disadvantaged communities and working lands.

While the bill did not pass in 2017, the legislative session culminated in the establishment of a joint Carbon Reduction committee, as well as a Carbon Policy Office, both of which will be working to craft a carbon pricing proposal to be introduced in 2019. The Carbon Policy Office has commissioned the following research relevant to pricing carbon: (1) a study by the Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) to inventory carbon stocks and flows in Oregon forests and wood products sectors; (2) research on the effects of carbon pricing on emissions-intensive, trade-exposed industries (EITEs) is underway; and (3) a study on broad statewide macroeconomic effects.

Accompanying this research will be three formal working groups focused on: (1) natural and working lands, (2) low income and utilities, and (3) a business advisory group focused primarily on large employers. Other working groups focus on electric utilities and transportation.

The Oregon Carbon Policy Office presented its guiding principles for carbon policy:

- Deliver real GHG reductions;
- Mitigate the economically regressive nature of carbon pricing with corrective mechanisms;
- Coordinate with other jurisdictions and regional partners;
- Focus on programs for the transition of Oregon to cleaner forms of energy
- Primarily address fossil fuels, but recognize the opportunities that Oregon's lands presents;
- Create opportunities to integrate concerns of all communities, from urban to rural, and to identify opportunities for them; and
- Be transparent in policy design and implementation.

Projected Climate Change Impacts for Oregon Communities and Lands

Working lands and the people who depend on them are on the front lines of climate change impacts (drought, wildfire, reduced snowpack, etc.). These communities and lands also have unique opportunities to fight climate change through adaptive planning, emission reductions, and carbon sequestration. A presentation by the Oregon Climate Change Research Institute (OCCRI) summarized climate projections for Oregon and their potential impacts on forestry and agriculture.²

The forest sector could be greatly affected by projected climate shifts in several ways. The median annual burned area will likely increase significantly with just 2° Fahrenheit of increased global warming. In a scenario where global emissions continue to climb dramatically, the Willamette River Basin could see ~6 million total acres burned over the next century. Agriculture

² OCCRI published the [Third Oregon Climate Assessment Report](#) in 2017, which includes chapters on forest ecosystems and agriculture.

may also face very significant challenges from projected climate change impacts. For instance, higher levels of CO₂ in the atmosphere favor the expansion of weeds. Dairy production per head declines in higher temperatures. While effects on snowpack and streamflow are complex and nuanced, generally less water is expected to be available when and where it is needed for irrigation and other agricultural uses.

Given these projections, a main theme of discussion over the course of the conference was the need to identify and support expanded use of strategies that jointly help natural and working lands (NWL) adapt to climate change while mitigating GHG emissions. California has integrated joint mitigation and adaptation (JMA) strategies into its carbon pricing policies and associated programs after identifying that ~17% of the state's overall 2030 GHG reduction goal could be met by NWL. A statewide scoping plan led to adoption of a 15-20 million metric ton GHG reduction target for NWL by 2030. The scoping plan is being revised to identify specific incentives and policies to achieve the 2030 goal for NWL, including several programs within California's Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund (GGRF) focused on forestry and agriculture.

3 Impacted Communities, Rural Economy, and Equity

One objective of the conference was to examine what rural communities might stand to gain and/or lose in pricing carbon. In a pre-meeting survey, participants identified **their greatest concern about carbon pricing as being the potential economic implications for rural communities**, and in particular natural resource based industries with tight financial margins.

The exact impacts of energy and fuel price changes on communities are dependent upon details of the policy. The allocation and consignment of allowances, the design and target population for any rebate programs, as well as the inclusion or exclusion of industries as Emissions Intensive and Trade Exposed (EITE) will impact how any price increases are felt by rural and impacted communities.

The second most frequently identified concern in the pre-meeting survey was that of social and economic equity for disadvantaged communities (DACs)—e.g. racial and ethnic minorities and low-income households—at elevated exposure to the disruptions of climate change. The conference provided an opportunity for participants to discuss which communities are most vulnerable to the effects of climate change and the specific ways in which they are vulnerable. Key issues of concern related to DACs are: the treatment of pollution allowances, whether or not they are auctioned by the state or freely allocated to regulated entities, offset program design, and how to mitigate co-pollutants harmful to human health.

Under the Oregon Clean Energy Jobs Bill of 2018, "*impacted communities*," which is inclusive of DACs, are defined as communities with above average concentrations of minority and low-income households, high unemployment, high linguistic isolation, low levels of homeownership, high rent burden, and sensitive populations or residents with low levels of educational attainment. Previously drafted bills directed portions of the investments from a cap and invest

policy to programs that benefit impacted communities. Precedence for this exists in the California GGRF,³ which directs 25% of funding to DACs and 10% to low-income communities.

Climate change also threatens the livelihoods of people working the land. Participants identified forest and farm workers as key impacted communities having a direct stake, but sometimes little say, in the treatment of working lands. These groups are oftentimes members of the same disadvantaged communities identified in prior legislation. Participants identified employment and compensation for forest and farmworkers as a concern, and suggested that investments in JMA practices on natural and working lands include funding for equity co-benefits such as ensuring workers have a living wage and prevention of exposure to harmful chemicals.

Participants also emphasized a need to encourage circulating dollars locally by training local people for newly created jobs and supporting local, small-to-medium sized businesses. Other economic criteria include an emphasis on job training and education opportunities being targeted to urban and rural impacted communities to help create jobs implementing JMA programs across Oregon's working and natural lands. A few instances were identified where such an approach is already underway, including the Lomokatsi Restoration Project in southern Oregon, the John Day Conservation District in eastern Oregon, and reinvigorating a USDA Forest Service wildfire fighter training program based in Portland that once involved ~700 urban youth, including urban tribal youth.

Oregon's nine Native American tribes were recognized as key impacted communities. Tribes across the country have begun to engage their forests in the market for carbon offsets. A key question these tribes encounter is whether or not carbon offset monies are recognized as non-taxable Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) trust revenue in the same way that tribal timber is. A clear answer was not identified during the conference.

Private working lands face many threats, including a demographic crunch as older farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners leave the sector. The newly created Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program intends to address landowner succession issues through conservation planning, conservation covenants and easements, and succession planning aimed at ensuring working lands remain in agricultural production. Meeting participants recognized that intergenerational land transitions present both a need and an opportunity to transition operations toward greater climate resilience and to improve their climate change mitigation potential. This includes providing working lands with improved information and tools related to the financial implications of transitioning practices to JMA approaches.

Opportunities identified include: (1) expanding the capacity of soil and water conservation districts to provide assistance with transitioning practices toward JMA approaches during ownership transitions, (2) adjusting programs that serve beginning farms, ranchers, and forestland owners to emphasize JMA strategies, and (3) assisting communities and tribes to

³ The GGRF has programs focused on: agricultural soils, healthy forests, urban forestry and greening, climate adaptation (conservation easements, climate resilience projects), wetland restoration, sustainable agricultural lands conservation. Applications of GGRF funds for each of these project types must quantify GHG emission reductions using established protocols and to the extent feasible estimate social, economic, and environmental co-benefits.

acquire industrial timberland when it comes up for sale, then helping these new owners implement JMA strategies. In a few instances cited by meeting participants, this has taken the form of integrating carbon offset revenue into acquisition financing.

4 Agriculture

Comprised of eight distinct agricultural regions producing more than 220 agricultural commodities, Oregon's working landscape is a mosaic of agricultural and forestry operations. In the proposed cap and invest policy, agriculture is not regulated under emission caps but is eligible to generate carbon offsets, and farmers and ranchers may benefit from programs designed to encourage JMA practices. Participants discussed concerns related to possible negative economic effects for agricultural operations that use significant amounts of fossil fuels.

For the average Oregon farmer, about 10% of their production costs come in the form of direct energy consumption. Operating on very slim profit margins, farmers could be negatively impacted by dramatic increases in fuel costs if measures to mitigate the impacts are not taken. Participants pointed out that not all commodities or agricultural areas of Oregon would be impacted equally due to variance in energy consumption among production systems. Many of these systems have the potential to improve adaptive capacity, enhance soil carbon storage, and/or reduce farm related emissions and fuel consumption through upgrades in technology and various shifts in practices. However, upfront expenses can present a significant barrier to adopting such changes. Opportunities also exist to expand renewable energy on farms, as only 4% of Oregon farms currently have large renewable energy installations on site. This was tempered by the acknowledgment that it is inappropriate to locate solar panels and wind turbines on prime agricultural soils at the expense of agricultural production.

The diversity of Oregon agriculture also makes it difficult to determine the best strategies for increasing its climate adaptive capacity and emissions mitigation potential. Participants identified a need to complete a gap analysis of existing agricultural JMA practices, identifying what practices might apply to Oregon ranching and cropping systems, where the largest benefits could accrue on agricultural lands, and what research could be applied to developing JMA strategies for agricultural systems lacking developed approaches. One suggestion is to leverage tools in development by USDA to better target practices for maximum economic and environmental benefits.

Climate change and market viability will likely continue to pose challenges for Oregon agriculture. Thus, participants recognized that mitigating climate change and increasing agricultural economic sustainability will need to be mutually reinforcing goals. Ideas include expanding marketing initiatives such as, "Oregon Grown" and "Salmon Safe," to include marketing of products produced on farms implementing JMA practices. Another proposal is to provide greater support in the transition from conventional to organic agriculture under the premise that some practices required or encouraged under the National Organic Program can provide increased reductions in emissions. Some advocated for directing climate dollars towards irrigation modernization in priority areas that offer conservation co-benefits.

Meeting participants held diverse and sometimes differing perspectives on how to balance rigor and measurable outcomes of incentive or offset programs with ease of administration and flexibility for individual participants. Offsets have proven to be a flash point for agriculture in

California. The complexity of offset protocols (baseline structures, additionality requirements, etc.) has made it difficult for farmers to meet their requirements and prove compliance. Some participants warned of creating a system of baselines and additionality incapable of rewarding early adopters for prior and ongoing climate change mitigation practices. This is not an issue for forestry projects as improved forest management (IFM) protocols typically reward forest landowners for carbon stocks already stored in above ground biomass (live and dead trees).

Additionality and permanence can present significant challenges for agricultural offset programs (see [agricultural offset issue brief](#)). How "common practice" activities and carbon levels are defined is critical. Areas and/or sectors with a history of conservation practices may be disadvantaged if baselines are set higher than in areas with historically poor practices. For instance, if no-till planting is common for a certain commodity, it raises the baseline of common practices for production of that commodity, thereby making it difficult for producers to be rewarded via offsets for adopting or maintaining no-till production. Some jurisdictions, e.g. the Canadian Province of Alberta, approach this issue by allowing for "proportional additionality." Conference participants suggested examining whether adoption of such an approach in Oregon would be acceptable in a marketplace linked to California.

In part because of the challenges of additionality and developing measurable yet flexible and simple offset protocols, participants tended to favor incentives over offsets. They identified existing conservation programs, e.g. OWEB grant programs including the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program, as potential distributors of investment funds. They questioned whether investment funds should be added to the budget of existing grants, or serve as a separate source of necessary match funds for existing grants.

Participants also pointed to unexplored synergies between industries that can provide economic and climate change benefits. An example was providing dairies with access to saw dust from forest thinning or sawmill residues to produce compost.

5 Forestry

Data from the USDA Forest Service Forest Inventory and Analysis program (FIA) is being used by the Oregon Global Warming Commission and Oregon Department of Forestry to analyze recent decadal trends in forest carbon across all ownerships and ecoregions in the state. These data suggest that Oregon is a net sink of forest carbon, annually sequestering an amount of CO₂ equivalent to approximately half of emissions from all other sectors (transportation, electric power, commercial/residential, and agriculture) in the state. While California is developing goals and implementation plans for its natural and working lands related to further emission reductions, Oregon has yet to develop such plans.

Meeting participants discussed areas where additional carbon storage could accumulate, suggesting that moist forests west of the Cascade crest are likely preferable, particularly lands in the Coast Range. Preliminary analysis from The Nature Conservancy presented at the conference identified 35% of forestlands in Oregon as being high productivity and of low wildfire risk. Most of these areas are in the Coast Range, suggesting that expansion of Oregon's forest carbon sink may best be focused within these areas. On the east side of the Cascades, participants generally offered that efforts should continue to encourage forest adaptation by a combination of mechanical thinning and prescribed fire, such as is being completed through ODF's Federal Forest Restoration Program.

Participants recognized that the most productive timberlands are increasingly owned by institutional investment organizations focused on maximizing returns to investors. Given the low price of carbon offsets in relation to current record high timber prices, it does not appear likely that the carbon market will significantly influence carbon storage on industrial lands in the near future. Rather, most participants suggested that encouraging carbon storage with non-industrial landowners through markets and incentive programs is an immediate opportunity, but one not without its challenges.

While generally recognizing it as desirable, participants offered more questions than solutions regarding what strategies can be used to encourage lengthening timber rotations toward the culmination of mean annual increment. While there is a real interest in carbon markets among non-industrial forest owners, a number of barriers to market entry have limited participation.

Discussions around forestry at the conference focused largely on existing carbon offset markets, scrutinizing them for perceived shortcomings and examining ways to improve market function and access. For California's cap and trade program offset projects for improved forest management represent the largest segment of offsets with over 72 million forest credits issued to date.

The conference featured representatives from two recent forest carbon offset projects in Oregon; one a 24,000-acre project on a tribal forest and another a 120-acre project on a non-industrial family forest. Both spoke of challenges in navigating the carbon market, relaying that the process is complex and is characterized by extensive paper-work, delays, and high transaction costs.

Participants expressed general interest in making the carbon market an option for non-industrial forests. Suggestions included: examining protocol requirements and streamlining where possible, using technology to reduce inventory and verification expenses, and developing a protocol for aggregation (see background information on carbon offset aggregation and forest offset protocols in the [conference issue briefs](#)). One suggestion was to authorize a state actor to step in and be an aggregator and there was an acknowledgment that per Oregon Code 526.780 the State Forester has authority to play this role. Another recommendation was to leverage ODF Stewardship Foresters in each county to assist with monitoring carbon offset projects, although some participants cautioned that agency staff do not currently have capacity for these additional responsibilities.

Without offering many specific recommendations, participants seemed to favor an incentive approach (direct payments akin to a Farm Bill program) to improve carbon sequestration on working lands as opposed to offsets. Participants cited offset project transaction costs and bureaucratic delays in payments as reasons to favor incentive-based approaches. Participants suggested the following existing programs as possible analogues: The Conservation Stewardship Program (focused on monitoring performance over-time in relation to a conservation plan), the Healthy Forest Reserve Program (conserving working forests through term easements), the Oregon Forest Resource Trust, and Washington State's Riparian Easement program. Some cautioned that these programs are not without their hurdles, citing the ongoing monitoring requirements of easements as a challenge.

First Name	Last Name	Job Title	Affiliation
Lisa	Arkin	Executive Director	Beyond Toxics
Sam	Baraso		Multnomah County
Pamela	Barrow	Vice President	Food Northwest
Kelley	Beamer	Executive Director	Coalition of Oregon Land Trusts
Rick	Brown	volunteer	350PDX
Vivian	Bui	WFI Professional Programs Coordinator	World Forestry Center
Jeen	Bunnik	International Fellow from The Netherlands	World Forestry Center
Gwen	Busby	Economist	GreenWood Resources
Charles	Calica		Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs
Bridget	Callahan	Energy Program Associate	Sustainable Northwest
Kimberlee	Chambers	Supply Chain and Sustainability Program Manager	Organically Grown Company
North	Cheatham	President	Tangent Properties
Mike	Cloughesy	Director of Forestry	Oregon Forest Resources Insitute
Belton	Copp	Portfolio Manager	GreenWood Resources
Amanda	Dalton	President	Dalton Advocacy, Inc.
Meriel	Darzen	Staff Attorney	1000 Friends of Oregon
Brent	Davies	VP, Forests & Ecosystem Services	Ecotrust
Matt	Davis	Senior Policy Analyst, Air Quality	Oregon Department of Environmental Quality
Gyan	de Silva	Graduate Student	Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studi
Bob	Deal	Research Forester	PNW Research Station
Michael	Dembrow	Senator	Oregon Senate
Tammy	Dennee	Legislative Director	Oregon Dairy Farmers Association
David	Diaz	Director of Forest Technology & Analytics	Ecotrust
Jackie	Dingfelder	Former State Senator	Oregon State
Jenny	Dresler	Director of Grassroots and lobbyist	Public Affairs Counsel
Shadia	Duery	International Fellowship Program Manager	World Forestry Center
Josh	Fain	Project Director	Pinchot Institute for Conservation
David	Ford	Principal	L&C Carbon
Ashlee	Fox	Gerhardt Intern	1000 Friends of Oregon
Justin	Freeman	Associate	Oregon Winegrowers Association
Anna	Freitas	Policy Analyst	OACD
Paula	Gagnon	Lands Steward	Wetlands Conservancy
Jana	Gastellum	Program Director, Climate	Oregon Environmental Council
Kate	Hammarback	Oregon Impact Fund Consultant	Occam Advisors
Ryan	Haugo	Director of Conservation Science	The Nature Conservancy in Oregon
Pam	Hayes	NA	Hyla Woods
Ben	Hayes	Project Director	Pinchot Institute for Conservation
Peter	Hayes	NA	Hyla Woods
Michael	Held	Director of Economic and Policy Services	Rural Development Initiatives
Ken	Helm	Representative	Oregon State Legislature
Ian	Hill	Founder/Gov. Affairs	SeQuential
Carolyn	Holland	VP, Engagement	Ecotrust
Jeremy	Hunt	Research Fellow	Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studi
Dan	Jarman	President	Crosswater Strategies
Derek	Johnson	Director of Protection and Stewardship	The Nature Conservancy
Shilpa	Joshi	Coalition Director	Renew Oregon
John	Keith	Executive Director	OACD
Steve	Kelley	Trustee	Kelley Family Foundation
Bryce	kellogg	Forest Spatial Analyst	The Nature Conservancy
Megan	Kemple	Director	Oregon Climate and Agriculture Network
Brian	Kittler	Director, Western Regional Office	Pinchot Institute
Dylan	Kruse	Policy Director	Sustainable Northwest
Bev	Law	Professor	Oregon State University
Bart	Lawrence	Forester	USDA-NRCS
Taylor	Lucey	Director of Manufacturing & Resources	OFIC
Jessica	Luhning	Sustainability Manager	Organic Valley
Patrick	Maloney	Principal	Occam Advisors
Nellie	McAdams	Farm Preservation Program Director	Rogue Farm Corps

Colin	Mconnaha	Climate Policy Manager	Carbon Policy Office
Lydia	Mednoza		
Ken	Miller		Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs
Carina	Miller		Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs
Josh	Monifi	Policy & Communications Manager	Food Northwest
Phil	Mote		Oregon Climate Change Research Institute
James	Mulligan	Associate	World Resources Institute
Shannon	Murray	Program Coordinator	Oregon State University College of Forestry
Julius	Pasay	Forest and Grassland Asset Manager	The Climate Trust
Michelle	Passero		The Nature Conservancy
Tuan Manh	Phan	International Fellow from Vietnam	World Forestry Center
Kip	Pheil	Energy Specialist	USDA - Natural Resources Conservation Servi
Melanie	Plaut	volunteer	350PDX
Ken	Popper		The Nature Conservancy
Lee	Rahr	Energy Program Director	Sustainable Northwest
Camila	Rodriguez Tayl	Researcher	Pinchot Institute
Ashley	Rood	Consultant	Independent
Alexandria	Roullier	Research Assistant	Rogue Farm Corps- Nellie McAdams
Shavonne	Sargent		Consulting Forester
Rand	Schenck	retired	Intel
Mary	Scurlock	Principal Policy Analyst	M. Scurlock & Associates
Kyler	Sherry	Project Analyst	The Climate Trust
Nikola	Smith	Ecosystem Services Specialist	U.S. Forest Service PNW Region
Brock	Smith		Oregon State Legislature
Mark	Stern	Director, Forest Conservation	The Nature Conservancy
Sean	Stevens	Executive Director	Oregon Wild
Jonathan	Stewart	Manager/Owner	Raincloud Tree Farm
Kaola	Swanson	Oregon Program Director	Pacific Forest Trust
Maggie	Tallmadge	Environmental Justice Manager	Coalition of Communities of Color
Rich	Vial	State Representative	House District 26
Andrew	Yost	Forest Ecologist	Oregon Dept. of Forestry
Rick	Zenn	Senior Fellow	World Forestry Center - World Forest Institute
Scott	Zimmerman	marketing/operations/finance	Shur-cut industries