

MINUTES

Oregon Sustainability Board



Meeting Date: September 26, 2025

Time: 9:00 am to 2:30 pm

Location: Zoom and Lincoln City Parks and Recreation

Attendees: OSB: Rex Burkholder (Chair), Johanna Anderson, Webly Bowles, Serena Dietrich, Josh Proudfoot, Elin Shepard, Tom Kelly,
DAS: Steven Markham, Jeni Hall, Zechariah Heck (ODOT)

Guest Presenters: Geoff Crook, Oregon Department of Energy; Chair Macdonald Oregon Climate Action Committee; Anca Matica, Governor Office; Ricardo Lujan Valerio, Secretary of State's Office; Chanel Hason Elakha Alliance

Collaboration with the Oregon Climate Action Commission 9:00-10:00 am

The board engaged in a collaborative discussion with Chair McDonald and Geoff Crook to explore opportunities for alignment and partnership between OSB and OCAC. Chair McDonald provided an overview of OCAC's structure, which includes 35 members, among them agency directors, legislators, and non-voting members from academia and other sectors. OCAC's current focus areas include natural and working lands, sector-based and consumption-based emissions, and the TIGR (Transformational Integrated Greenhouse Gas Reduction) modeling initiative. The commission is also working closely with DEQ on the Climate Action Plan and the Oregon Energy Strategy, and is increasing its engagement with tribal governments and local communities.

The discussion highlighted several areas of potential collaboration, including joint participation in meetings, shared legislative recommendations, and coordinated efforts around embodied carbon, sustainable procurement, and renewable energy. The board expressed interest in contributing to OCAC's TIGR modeling by offering insights from agency-level sustainability plans and operational data. Both groups acknowledged the importance of aligning their efforts to maximize impact and reduce duplication.

Review of OSB Work Plan; Coordination with Offices of Governor Kotek and Secretary of State Read 10:00-11:30 AM

The board then shifted focus to internal strategy and planning. A major theme was the need to improve sustainable procurement practices across state agencies. Members emphasized the potential for cost savings and environmental benefits through bulk purchasing agreements, renewable energy contracts, and coordinated EV infrastructure investments. There was consensus that DAS (Department of Administrative Services) should play a stronger leadership role in facilitating enterprise-wide procurement strategies. Another key topic was agency accountability. Board members discussed the importance of standardized reporting on sustainability plans, with a focus on meaningful metrics such as fleet electrification, building energy use, and inter-agency collaboration. The board expressed a desire to update the sustainability plan blueprint and improve the quality and consistency of agency presentations.

Equity and inclusion were also discussed as essential components of sustainability. Members suggested integrating equity metrics into sustainability plans and aligning with the work of the Environmental Justice Council. There was a call to frame equity in ways that resonate across political and geographic divides, such as focusing on income-based access and rural representation.

Operationally, the board acknowledged the upcoming leadership transition, with the Secretary of State set to assume the chair role in January. Recruitment efforts are underway to fill four vacancies, with a focus on rural, youth, and equity-focused candidates. Members supported resuming monthly working meetings to maintain momentum and continuity between quarterly sessions.

Presentation from Elakha Alliance

11:30-AM – 12:00 pm

Chanel Thiessen, Director of Outreach and Community Relations for the Elakah Alliance, delivered an engaging presentation on the ecological and cultural importance of reintroducing sea otters to the Oregon coast. She explained that sea otters are a keystone species whose presence supports the health of kelp forests and estuaries. Their absence has contributed to the overpopulation of purple sea urchins, leading to the degradation of underwater ecosystems.

Chanel shared the history of sea otters in Oregon, including their near-extinction due to the maritime fur trade and a failed reintroduction attempt in the 1970s. She outlined the Alliance's current efforts, including a \$1.6 million America the Beautiful Challenge grant awarded in partnership with the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians. The grant will fund the development of a reintroduction plan over the next three years. The presentation emphasized the ecological, cultural, and economic benefits of restoring sea otters, and highlighted the importance of tribal leadership and community engagement in the process.

Wrap Up

12:00 pm-12:15 pm

The board reviewed its draft work plan for 2026 and discussed how to prioritize its efforts. Key themes included supporting the implementation of building decarbonization guidelines, strengthening sustainable procurement practices, and enhancing agency accountability through improved reporting. Members emphasized the importance of aligning with existing initiatives, such as the Climate Action Plan and DEQ's embodied carbon program, rather than duplicating efforts.

There was strong interest in leveraging the new Chief Sustainability Officer position at DAS to coordinate cross-agency efforts and provide technical support. The board also discussed the need to clarify its advisory role and ensure that its recommendations are actionable and aligned with agency capacities. Members proposed developing a memo summarizing strategic priorities and circulating a poll to rank work plan items by impact and level of effort. This will inform the December meeting, where the new chair will join and help finalize the board's direction for the coming year.

Lunch Followed by tour of Cascade Head Biosphere

12:15-2:30 pm