Draft Natural Climate Solutions Workplan to Support EO 25-26 Implementation

Context

The Oregon Department of Energy's Natural Climate Solutions (NCS) program is a joint effort with the Oregon Climate Action Commission (OCAC). ODOE's NCS program has four main Legislatively required elements:

1. Land-Based Net Carbon Inventory
2. NCS Workforce Needs Study
3. NCS and Metrics Analysis
4. State Goal for Net Sequestration and Storage

The Inventory and Workforce study were completed in December 2025, the net sequestration and storage goal was established in July 2026, and the NCS and Metrics Analysis will be completed in early 2027. These four products are basic building blocks to further the state's NCS policy and provide direction for the Commission's consideration of allocations from the Natural and Working Lands Fund. These building blocks provide significant value-added services to support and enhance the work being done by the numerous agencies to accomplish the goals of Executive Order 25-26.

There are five main services that ODOE's NCS program provides sister agencies which could help in their efforts to comply with the EO. ODOE's NCS program provides:

1. Necessary data and information
2. Reporting infrastructure, tools, and methods
3. Forums for inter-agency collaboration
4. Identified data gaps and research topics
5. Essential work with Tribes

The new information provided through the NCS program at the landscape, statewide, and cross-agency level, will be helpful to agencies as they plan and decide on the best actions to fulfill the mandates of the EO.

The tools and methods ODOE has created will help agencies by: a) facilitating planning and decision-making, b) monitoring progress toward meeting cross-agency program objectives and goals, c) evaluating the ecosystem, community, and carbon benefit of their planned actions, and d) better identifying of the multitude of benefits from each action they implement.

The NCS Inter-agency Work Group is a unique forum comprised of eight natural resource agencies listed in statute as being directly involved with the NCS program and provides an opportunity for inter-agency collaboration and information sharing and leverages the resulting synergistic ideas that come out of the forum discussions. The Natural & Working Lands Advisory Committee of the OCAC, comprised of 16 external stakeholders (e.g., representatives from soil

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and water conservation districts, land trusts, advocacy groups, forest and farm owners, EJ communities, Tribal government representatives, and others) provide important feedback and experience to inform current and future NCS work by agencies.

The NCS program has been developing a list of data gaps and potential research topics/projects while completing the four primary elements of the program. Over time, as the program works to fill these gaps, data and information that agencies can use to further refine or expand their NCS work and actions under the EO will become available. A full draft list of the NCS is available on the OCAC website and will be updated and published with the NCS and Metrics Analysis.

Statute requires the OCAC to determine a process by which Tribes can provide knowledge and guide NCS work, and to ensure that its NCS work can reciprocally support indigenous practices and knowledge. This work is being assisted by the Governor's Tribal Affairs Director. This process will inform how Indigenous Traditional Ecological and Cultural Knowledge (ITECK) can be integrated with Oregon's NCS work and agency implementation efforts.

1. Relevant Sections of EO

The parts of the EO relevant to the NCS program are noted in italics:

Define Key Resilience Attributes for Lands and Waters

1. *Interagency Team Shall Develop Resilience Attributes*
2. *Interagency Team Shall Develop Baseline Conditions*
3. *Lead Agencies Shall Coordinate with ODOE re Natural and Working Lands work*

Keep Oregon's Working Lands and Waters Working

1. *Identify and Improve Programs, Tools, and Incentives that Support Stewardship and Co-Benefits*
2. Improve Permitting Processes for Restoration Projects on Working Lands and Waters
3. Improve Application and Grant Review Processes
4. *Evaluate Opportunities to Support Long-term Resilience of Near-Shore Resources*

Conserve Natural Lands and Waters

1. *Protect, Conserve, Connect or Restore 10% of Lands and Waters within 10 years*
2. *Develop Innovative Mitigation Solutions*

Lead by Example

1. *Develop and Implement Strategies to Enhance Climate Resiliency as a Co-benefit of Existing Management Objectives*

Community and Wildfire Resilience

1. *Support Efforts to Create a Plan for Resilient Oregon*
2. Implement 20-year Landscape-Resiliency Plan
3. Create Fire-Adapted Communities

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2. Anticipated Agency Action

a. *Summary of Agency Action (including whether it is additive to work being done now, an adjustment or elevation of work being done now or new work not currently being done)*
b. *Connection to EO Directives Noted Above; note any factors that make the action particularly timely, relevant etc.*
c. *Identification of any interagency collaboration and/or collaboration with external partners (e.g. community-based organizations, conservation non-profits, Tribes, others) planned as part of the work.*

Summary of Agency Action:

After identifying metrics by which to track mitigation and adaptation benefits of NCS by early 2027, the program will continue to work with the inter-agency working group to:

- Build statewide tracking infrastructure where needed that aligns with the tracking infrastructure necessary for the EO directives.
- Develop decision support tools across landscape types relative to nature-based mitigation and adaptation potential to support NCS management actions.
- Continue to improve the methods and data employed in the Land-based Net Carbon Inventory that tracks changes to the carbon cycle in the state.
- Model potential nature-based pathways to achieve the Natural & Working Lands sequestration goal.
- Partner with the Higher Education Coordinating Commission to prioritize policy actions to build Oregon's NCS workforce.

ODOE's actions are a continuation of what the statute has obligated the agency to do on behalf of the government enterprise to supply information to agencies and land managers throughout the state.

Connection to EO Directives:

The new NCS program crosscuts the work of land managing agencies and is particularly relevant to accomplishing the objectives of the EO. (Note: the relevant above-mentioned value-added services are added in parentheses for each EO Directive.)

- ***Define Key Resilience Attributes: 1. Interagency Team Shall Develop Resilience Attributes.*** *(Necessary data and information)* ODOE staff attended the resilience attributes at the workshop in March and provided comments on the draft report via survey.
- ***Define Key Resilience Attributes: 2. Interagency Team Shall Develop Baseline Conditions.*** *(Reporting Infrastructure, tools, and methods):* ODOE has an interest in the final geospatial product that this Directive will create because it is similar, if not the same, information that is necessary for tracking NCS, for example: land and waters protection or avoided conversion, and land and waters restoration. Ideally, ODOE would

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coordinate with agency leads on qualifying actions to ensure alignment and leveraging NCS tracking responsibilities.

- ***Define Key Resilience Attributes: 3. Lead Agencies Shall Coordinate with ODOE re Natural and Working Lands work.*** *(Forums for inter-agency collaboration; and Reporting Infrastructure, tools, and methods)* ODOE is eager to coordinate with the Governor's Office, as well as the EO Leadership Team, regarding the programmatic connections between the work necessary to accomplish the aims of the EO and ODOE's ongoing statutorily required work related to tracking natural climate solutions and their positive and negative effects on the environment and communities. Both require the study and establishment of statewide tracking infrastructure to achieve their complementary and sometimes overlapping aims. Programmatic collaboration ensures the best use of staff resources, streamlining reporting infrastructure, and the sharing of knowledge between agencies.
- ***Keep Oregon's Lands and Waters Working 1. Identify and Improve Programs, Tools, and Incentives that Support Stewardship and Co-Benefits.*** *(Necessary data and information; Identified data gaps and research topics; Reporting Infrastructure, tools, and methods)* The program has developed the Inventory tool and plans to develop additional tools that provide data for state agency decision-making necessary to achieve climate resilience. The Inventory, as well as the NCS Workforce Study (full title: Workforce Development and Training Programs Needs Study), also include information that state agencies may use to improve their own programs, processes, and practices to further resilience. Through the work completed so far in the NCS program, ODOE has identified new incentives, as well as policy changes to existing incentives that would support nature-based climate action stewardship -- whether for adaptation or mitigation purposes.
- ***Keep Oregon Lands and Waters Working 4. Evaluate Opportunities to Support Long-term Resilience of Near-Shore Resources.*** *(Necessary data and information; Identified data gaps and research topics; Reporting infrastructure, tools, and methods)* The analyses the NCS program has conducted, and future tools it develops, can evaluate opportunities to support long-term resilience of near-shore resources including the data gaps necessary to ensure we maximize carbon sequestration where appropriate per the EO's Directive.
- ***Conserve Lands and Waters 1. Protect, Conserve, Connect or Restore 10% of Lands and Waters within 10 years****. (Necessary data and information; Forums for inter-agency collaboration; Identified data gaps and research topics)* The EO requires agencies to maximize opportunities for carbon sequestration. ODOE is supplying information and helping evaluate how to achieve the goal through inter-agency collaboration and identifying and filling data gaps.
- ***Conserve Lands and Waters 2. Develop Innovative Mitigation Solutions.*** *(Necessary and data information; Forums for inter-agency collaboration; Identified data gaps and research topics)* Developing innovative mitigation solutions includes considering

frameworks for the mitigation and adaptation climate benefits of natural and working lands. The NCS program was created to supply statewide data that ODOE is responsible for, with other state agencies, maintaining and improving over time, and can inform the development of new mitigation solutions.

- ***Lead by Example. 1. Develop and Implement Strategies to Enhance Climate Resiliency as a Co-benefit of Existing Management Objectives.*** *(Necessary data and information; Reporting infrastructure, tools, and methods)* ODOE was directed via statute to create a strategy to enhance climate resiliency through the accounting of carbon flux on the landscape through the Inventory, and tracking NCS benefits to demonstrate that existing management activities are working to achieve climate resiliency through the NCS and Metrics Analysis. Integrating the NCS program and its information into other state agency operations will help achieve the EO's goals.
- ***Community and Wildfire Resilience 1. Support Efforts to Create a Plan for Resilient Oregon.*** *(Necessary data and information).* To the extent that the PRO Plan can "integrate with existing strategies and plans" we offer the information within the above-mentioned elements. Of particular interest may be the Workforce Study and the NCS and Metrics Analysis which includes a literature review of ecosystem, community, and carbon effects of NCS implementation, and related metrics to track selected effects.

Collaborations

(Forums for Coordination) ODOE's Inter-agency Working Group and the joint ODOE/OCAC external collaboration is primarily intended to convene necessary groups to align, learn from each other, and provide practitioner knowledge for the analyses conducted.

- **Inter-agency Working Group:** In addition to ODOE, seven agencies with statutory responsibilities with respect to NCS—the Department of Forestry, the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, the Parks and Recreation Department, the Department of State Lands, and the Department of Land Conservation and Development—gather to compile information across their jurisdictions to allow ODOE and the OCAC meet its directives. While land-managing agencies implement the work, ODOE staff supplies needed capacity, by studying agency programs and data, and identifying challenges and opportunities across agencies for increasing the pace and scale of NCS implementation. In the course of regularly updating its Inventory, ODOE can support filling data gaps for state agencies interested in tracking carbon benefits for their areas of interest and implementation progress. While the Workforce Study and the work to establish NCS tracking metrics are one-time directives, the Inventory's accounting system established pursuant to statute and the reporting on tracking NCS to evaluate progress in achieving the sequestration goal adopted by ODOE and the OCAC in coordination with the agencies, are both ongoing.

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- **Natural & Working Lands Advisory Committee:** As per statute, the OCAC convened a committee of external stakeholders, for which ODOE provides necessary staff support. The members implement NCS on the ground and are well positioned to advise ODOE and the OCAC on the state's NCS work. They include representatives from Tribal communities, soils and water conservation districts, land trusts, advocacy groups, forest and farm owners, and EJ communities. Nature-based mitigation, adaptation, and workforce topics are covered by the Committee.
- **Tribes:** By statute, the OCAC is required to work with Tribes to determine a process by which the Tribes can provide knowledge and guide NCS work, and to ensure that the NCS work can reciprocally support indigenous practices and knowledge. This process is coordinated by ODOE staff and will work to address questions such as whether and how indigenous practices should inform the list of NCS, and how Indigenous Traditional Ecological and Cultural Knowledge (ITECK) can be integrated with state efforts to track and increase carbon sequestration and storage on natural and working lands. This effort has not begun but will include the above-named agencies and others. Tribal Affairs Director has been briefed on this work.
- **The Oregon Climate Action Commission:** The Climate Action Team at ODOE, of which the NCS program is a part, staffs the Commission. The Commission meetings are an important meeting space where ODOE and the Commission collaborate on NCS-related work. Nearly all of the agency directors named in the EO are on the Commission, with participation from the Governor's Office. The Commission is Oregon's only cross discipline climate-focused government entity and is a space for knowledge sharing and connecting in the public sphere on climate and nature-based action (adaptation, mitigation, and resilience).

3. Alignment with Resiliency Attributes/Indicators:

Explain how the proposed work will help secure desired resiliency attributes. Note the attributes are draft for now but we will use them for the purposes of this exercise with expectation that workplans will adjust as needed to accommodate revisions. Refer to resiliency report for example indicators to help guide development of workplans.

The EO requires state agencies to maximize implementation of actions with co-benefits such as increased carbon sequestration. The ODOE NCS program studies the carbon dynamics of nature-based action and their effects on communities (socio-economic and ecological) so that land managing agencies have the information they need to maximize carbon sequestration opportunities. The Inventory will allow the state to track changes to the carbon cycle at a landscape scale.

The NCS program studies the actions, and will maintain tracking infrastructure for the actions, that deliver on the resilience attributes. Managing the carbon cycle, and the associated benefits

of its management, contribute directly to attributes of resilient landscapes, specifically the second and third attributes in the report:

- Diverse and complex habitats, species, landscapes, and aquatic systems that provide options for responding to change and disturbance.
- Space, time, and capacity for ecological processes to support and reinforce ecosystem function.

The community effects (socio-economic and ecological) metrics the NCS program is working on identifying with the Inter-agency Working Group align with all four of the attributes, and ODOE hopes they can be leveraged by agencies in their tracking efforts for the resilience work.

- Connectivity within and across land, sea, water, and sky.
- Diverse and complex habitats, species, landscapes, and aquatic systems that provide options for responding to change and disturbance.
- Space, time, and capacity for ecological processes to support and reinforce ecosystem function.
- Capacity to sustain communities, lifeways, and livelihoods.

4. Describe Relevant Metrics/Anticipated Outcomes:

Describe with as much specificity as possible, what is hoped to be accomplished over the course of the biennium. For multi-year projects, identify, if possible, a few key interim milestones. Note that you will provide information on implementation as part of semi-regular reports that will be prepared for submittal to the Governor's Office for distribution and discussion with relevant Boards/Commissions.

ODOE's NCS program provides capacity for the statewide reporting infrastructure necessary to meet the NCS directives in the law and could help with other state agency capacity for achieving the EO and implementation actions. ODOE's NCS program looks forward to coordinating on how the long-term data infrastructure set up through the NCS program can support the EO agencies and provide long-lasting support for the implementing agencies.

Directed outcomes include:

- *(Necessary data and information; Reporting infrastructure, tools, and methods)* Continual refinement of the Inventory tool over time which has a requirement to report every two years to understand changes to Oregon's land-based carbon cycle and track nature-based climate mitigation progress at a statewide landscape level.
- *(Reporting infrastructure, tools, and methods)* Setting up tracking infrastructure in collaboration with the Inter-agency Working Group. Tracking NCS implementation to make progress toward a natural and working lands carbon sequestration goal and reporting that progress in the Commission's report to the legislature every two years.

Desired outcomes include:

- *(Necessary data and information; Forums for inter-agency collaboration)* Working with other state agencies to digitize and/or organize data so that it can be harmonized across agencies, and with public efforts to track metrics that also support achieving the resilience attributes.
- *(Necessary data and information; Reporting infrastructure, tools, and methods)* Working on methods to evaluate the effects of NCS on carbon, ecosystems, and communities to increase the resilience of Oregon's lands.
- Maximizing opportunities that increase resilience and carbon sequestered and stored on natural and working lands.

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