



ODF Climate Change and Carbon Plan

Stakeholder Sessions Assessment Interview Summary

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Acknowledgements

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1. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

In spring 2021, The Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) engaged Oregon Consensus to conduct a series of stakeholder assessment sessions designed to gain feedback on its draft Climate Change and Carbon Plan (CCCP). The plan was developed in response to the Governor's Executive Order 20-04, mandating state agencies to develop a plan for reducing greenhouse gases. Along with input from tribes, counties, Board of Forestry members, and the general public, feedback from these parties will be considered and will help inform a revised draft, anticipated to be presented at a pre-decisional workshop in September 2021 between board members and the department's executive leadership. The CCCP is anticipated to be finalized by the Board of Forestry by the end of 2021.

2. METHODS

In early to mid-July, Oregon Consensus staff conducted four stakeholder sessions with members representing a cross-section of various perspectives engaged in ODF's carbon and climate change plan policies. They were members of organizations advocating for diversity, equity and inclusive public policy decision making; urban forestry programs; forest products industry; and conservation interests. The engagement was intended to provide feedback for the department to consider in their current consideration of the draft CCCP, as well as to begin to build trust and long-term relationships within underrepresented communities. In total, thirty-eight people attended the stakeholder sessions. A parallel general public comment opportunity for written comments on the draft plan was made available via ODF's web page and managed internally. This public comment period ran from Thursday, May 27 through Sunday, July 4, 2021.

The Oregon Consensus team asked interview questions that were intended to help inform ODF and to refine or further develop the CCCP, including actions and approaches that ODF should play a critical role in supporting or taking to reduce overall greenhouse gas emissions.

ABOUT OREGON CONSENSUS

Oregon Consensus helps people seek agreement on issues that matter to Oregonians

Oregon Consensus is a dispute resolution program that helps people seek agreement about public issues. Agreement seeking is often the best way to resolve these issues. It produces solutions that more people support—solutions that a single party is unlikely to achieve alone.

Oregon Consensus process

Dispute resolution usually begins with a situation assessment in which Oregon Consensus interviews stakeholders and other entities to help identify what people know and feel about the issues being addressed. If the situation assessment suggests that a collaborative approach would be useful, Oregon Consensus can design a plan for bringing people together, and provide a skilled, impartial facilitator/project manager. Project managers do not take sides or make any decisions for the group. They are integral to the group's collaborative efforts inside and outside of meetings.

This summary provides a brief synthesis of information gathered across the sessions, reflected in key highlights for the department's consideration. This is not intended to provide a comprehensive description of all topics and ideas discussed, or questions raised during the sessions. Supporting documents for the CCCP and ODF's process can be found at: <https://www.oregon.gov/odf/forestbenefits/Pages/climate-change.aspx>

3. ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND SUMMARY OF RESPONSES

3.1. What's the appropriate role for ODF to help reduce greenhouse gases, alongside other state agencies? How can they be most effective?

- ODF should serve as a leader and convener to promote collective learning, support connections, and leverage partnerships. This includes being a leader in promoting climate-smart forestry, and educating and disseminating key information on current best practices to private landowners and urban foresters.
- ODF should connect landowners and urban foresters to information about carbon markets and carbon crediting (e.g., what they would need to do to make it work) to bring awareness and bridge connections to highlight opportunities and current incentives.
- ODF should be a champion and cheerleader for the forest products industry, and promote increased use of wood in the built environment. This includes promoting workforce development, use of carbon storage in wood products, and highlighting case examples of what has gone well.
- ODF should build partnerships with other entities, agencies, and academic partners to assist in the workload, create a shared accountability, and leverage resources. ODF doesn't have to lead on every initiative or strategy. Examples of this include the department coordinating with entities working on addressing related efforts (e.g., energy distribution, fireproofing housing, and affordable housing) and building partnerships with organizations so they can help serve as messengers to spread the word about particular assistance grants in their communities.
- Use tools and incentives to monetize carbon, which will encourage longer rotations and help change the standard business model.
- Discourage the state from extending harvest rotations to sequester carbon. It comes at the price of the vibrant economies in rural Oregon.

3.2. What carbon and climate change specific actions are you willing to take or do you want to see? What could the agency do to support those actions? Are they currently reflected in the plan?

- Build inclusive decision making by routinely engaging underrepresented and rural communities in carbon and climate change discussions and actions, and particularly in post-fire response actions.
- Make information available in multiple languages that also accommodates people of all ages and abilities. Often conversations about reforestation, and research and monitoring are highly technical and hard to follow for the average community member.
- Promote the idea that working forests are a key component for storing carbon in wood products, as well as managing forest on the ground.
- Address prescribed burn liability and soil conservation.
- Continue to provide technical and grant support in urban forestry. This includes assistance for forest health, providing management scenarios assessment, and ongoing maintenance for trees.
- Help ensure local (quality) nursery stock is available for local communities and urban forestry programs.
- Ensure actions recognize the interdependence of the supply chain. Furthermore, aim actions at maintaining rural jobs and fostering workforce development.
- Do not implement carbon markets at the state level, and rather be consistent with a federal plan at the landscape level.
- Increase the pace and scale of restoration on public lands.
- Establish additional protections for mature and old growth trees.
- Include public funding for research and development (e.g., research innovative approaches to increase carbon benefits in forests life cycle analysis in forest products, and how to make long-lived wood products better).
- Connect notions of ecological restoration to fire resilience and preparedness. Use the triple bottom line model to enhance ecosystem production, while simultaneously providing training opportunities for future generations.
- Increase public funding for programs focusing on increased carbon benefits that already exist.

3.3. Anything missing? New frontiers? Tools or approaches?

- Include more specificity with regards to metrics, goals, accountability measures, and implementation timelines as part of this plan.
- Be clear about the ecological nuances of climate smart forestry across the landscape in Oregon.
- Include analysis of biomass and its potential negative impacts to vulnerable populations.

- Operationalize and embed meaningful community engagement in the collaborative planning process.
- Add additional goals around environmental justice, state agency collaboration, and individual private lands. Be inclusive of rural and low income communities.
- Create different goals for publicly owned state forest lands and privately owned forest lands.
- Designate managed fires zones that don't pose a threat to critical infrastructure or communities.
- Identify barriers (regulatory, social, economic) that may hinder the implementation of the CCCP as footnotes, or in a section of the document.
- Include lessons learned from Black, Indigenous, and other people of color. Specifically, address how the department will work to integrate these tribal climate mitigation and adaptation practices with regards to carbon sequestration and storage.
- Prompt salvage and reforestation following a catastrophic fire.
- Create a statewide plan for biocycle actions (e.g., biochar).
- Focus on restoration of critical habitats and watershed health.
- Include accounting for emissions from the forestry sector within the greenhouse gas reporting program.

4. CONCLUSION

In summary, there was a shared desire expressed among different stakeholders to assist and help shape the future of ODF's policy and operations related to carbon and climate change. ODF has opportunities to work in alignment with other agencies to contribute to greenhouse gas reductions. ODF and the Board of Forestry will benefit from ongoing engagement, advice, and support from stakeholders as they finalize the plan and move into implementation. Oregon Consensus wishes to thank all who participated in the sessions for sharing their time and thoughtful responses at this stage of the process.