



## COALITION OF OREGON LAND TRUSTS

2540 NE MLK JR BLVD, PORTLAND, OR 97212 • 503-719-4732 • OREGONLANDTRUSTS.ORG

October 7th, 2025

### **RE: Oregon Environmental Restoration Fund Engagement**

Co-Chair Sams, Co-Chair Dembrow, and Vice-Chair Holliday:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony today at the inaugural meeting of the Oregon Environmental Restoration Council. COLT and our members are excited to track the development of the Oregon Environmental Restoration Fund and the impact its investments will have for communities across Oregon.

COLT is a membership organization representing 32-member land trusts, soil and water conservation districts, and conservation organizations working to protect our habitat, water, and natural spaces - for all people, forever. Collectively, our members have protected more than 780,000 acres of land across our state.

This Fund offers a historic opportunity to strengthen our ecosystems and communities at a moment when such investment is needed most. Uncertainty around federal funding, a down state revenue forecast, and rescinded federal investments have led to significant cuts in natural resources programs and staff across the state.

At the same time, there is great demand for additional investment in land protection, stewardship, restoration, wildfire resilience, working lands protection, and sustained funding for "one-time" programmatic investments:

- The Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program (OAHP) received \$2 million for grants for the 2025-2027 biennium, despite a projected demand of \$17 million for the program;
- The Drinking Water Source Protection Grant Program received no additional funding for communities to protect drinking water sources, despite nearly \$15 million in projected need for the biennium and a \$10 million projected need



**24 MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS:** Blue Mountain Land Trust • Center for Natural Lands Management • Columbia Land Trust

Deschutes Land Trust • Ducks Unlimited • Forest Park Conservancy • Friends of the Columbia Gorge Land Trust

Greenbelt Land Trust • Klamath Lake Land Trust • Lower Nehalem Community Trust • McKenzie River Trust

North Coast Land Conservancy • Northwest Rangeland Trust • Oregon Agricultural Trust • Oregon Desert Land Trust

Pacific Forest Trust • Southern Oregon Land Conservancy • The Conservation Fund • The Nature Conservancy in Oregon

The Trust for Public Land • The Wetlands Conservancy • Willowa Land Trust • Western Rivers Conservancy • Wild Rivers Land Trust

**8 ASSOCIATE MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS:** Black Oregon Land Trust • Cerro Gordo Land Conservancy • Clackamas Soil & Water

Conservation District • East Multnomah Soil & Water Conservation District • Helvetia Community Association

Tualatin Soil & Water Conservation District • View the Future • Yamhill Soil & Water Conservation District

for the 2027-2029 biennium (based on OWEB surveying June 2024 and follow up outreach in September 2025);

- The Natural and Working Lands Fund received no additional grant funding for the biennium despite over \$6 million in demand for just the OWEB grant fund opportunities through the program (conservation management plans and open solicitation);
- The Oregon Conservation and Recreation Fund received no additional funding for the 2025-2027 biennium;
- Failure of passing the 1% for Wildlife bill which would have provided funding to the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) to support non-game species conservation; and
- Despite securing a sustained source of funding for wildfire mitigation and suppression (estimated at \$43 million through H.B. 3940), it is not enough to meet the \$280 million/biennium need.

These bullet points represent just a few examples of programs which would benefit from investments of the Environmental Restoration Fund.

As the Council moves forward in shaping programmatic priorities for the State Agency Program Fund and designing a new grant program for the Community Impact Fund, we hope for sustained collaboration with the conservation community to help guide investments toward the programs and communities of greatest need.

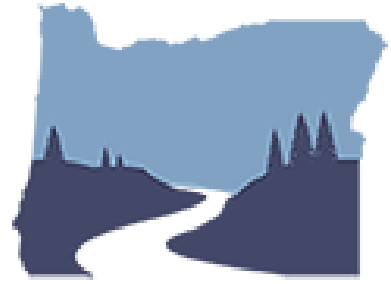
Thank you for your service on this Council and your commitment to ensuring benefit for Oregon's environment and communities across the state.

Sincerely,



Joe Buttafuoco  
Executive Director  
Coalition of Oregon Land Trusts





10/7/2025

To: Oregon Environmental Restoration Council

From: Network of Oregon Watershed Councils/Terri Preeg Riggsby

**RE: OERC Funding for Environmental Restoration**

Dear Members of the Oregon Environmental Restoration Council,

On behalf of Oregon's watershed councils, the Network of Oregon Watershed Councils would like to express our enthusiasm for the availability of critical funds for on-the-ground habitat restoration through the Monsanto Settlement Funds.

Watershed councils are staffed by natural resource experts and scientists and are guided by boards led by local community members. Our Watershed Councils are on the front lines of on-the-ground restoration work. They are familiar with the individual habitat needs within their watersheds, and have solutions for improving water, soil, and air quality through voluntary conservation projects. These projects are grounded in both ecological and community needs, and serve to enhance the waters and lands for native species and for people.

We believe that this is a critical time to invest in on-the-ground restoration work and resiliency on the land. Because watershed councils are both locally-led and locally-based, their work ensures that financial investments stay in the community to support the local economy. Through these projects, local businesses grounded in green workforce development contribute to building future leadership for a restoration economy in both rural and urban parts of our state.

We look forward to the investments that will be made possible through the work of the Oregon Environmental Restoration Council and hope that we can serve as a critical resource for implementation when funds are available.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

Terri Preeg Riggsby  
Executive Director, NOWC  
[ed@oregonwatersheds.org](mailto:ed@oregonwatersheds.org)  
971-404-4909 (cell)

**Public Comment from Jennifer “Jenna” Smith of Oak Grove, OR for the October 9, 2025 OERC Meeting**

My property is Streamside Steward to Willamette Creek & Wetland, which runs year-round (believed to be spring fed near the Laurie Ave x Railroad crossing).

Willamette Creek, along with my property, was badly damaged by the OG-LO Train Trestle Fire that occurred last year. All those I've approached regarding environmental and safety hazards to Willamette Creek and my property have pointed me towards endless loops of resources that lead nowhere.

In addition, I have been swamped with auto and property insurance claims from the fire, relocating animals from near the burnt train trestle to the backyard for their safety, plus increasing other safety measures like fencing, cameras and signage around my property. I am also on permanent disability with limited income and capabilities.

My property has been in my family since 1978, my childhood home, purchased from my parents 5+ years ago. Since then, I have worked hard to transform the landscape from invasives to native habitat. My property is now Gold Certified in the Backyard Habitat Program, registered with the North American Butterfly Association and Bird Alliance of Oregon.

Now, since the railroad fire, there is fine black creosote on everything outside. This creosote dust gets tracked inside my structures, plus into ductwork and vents across my property. Whenever I touch something outside my hand are covered in creosote dust that looks like I rubbed my hands in charcoal.

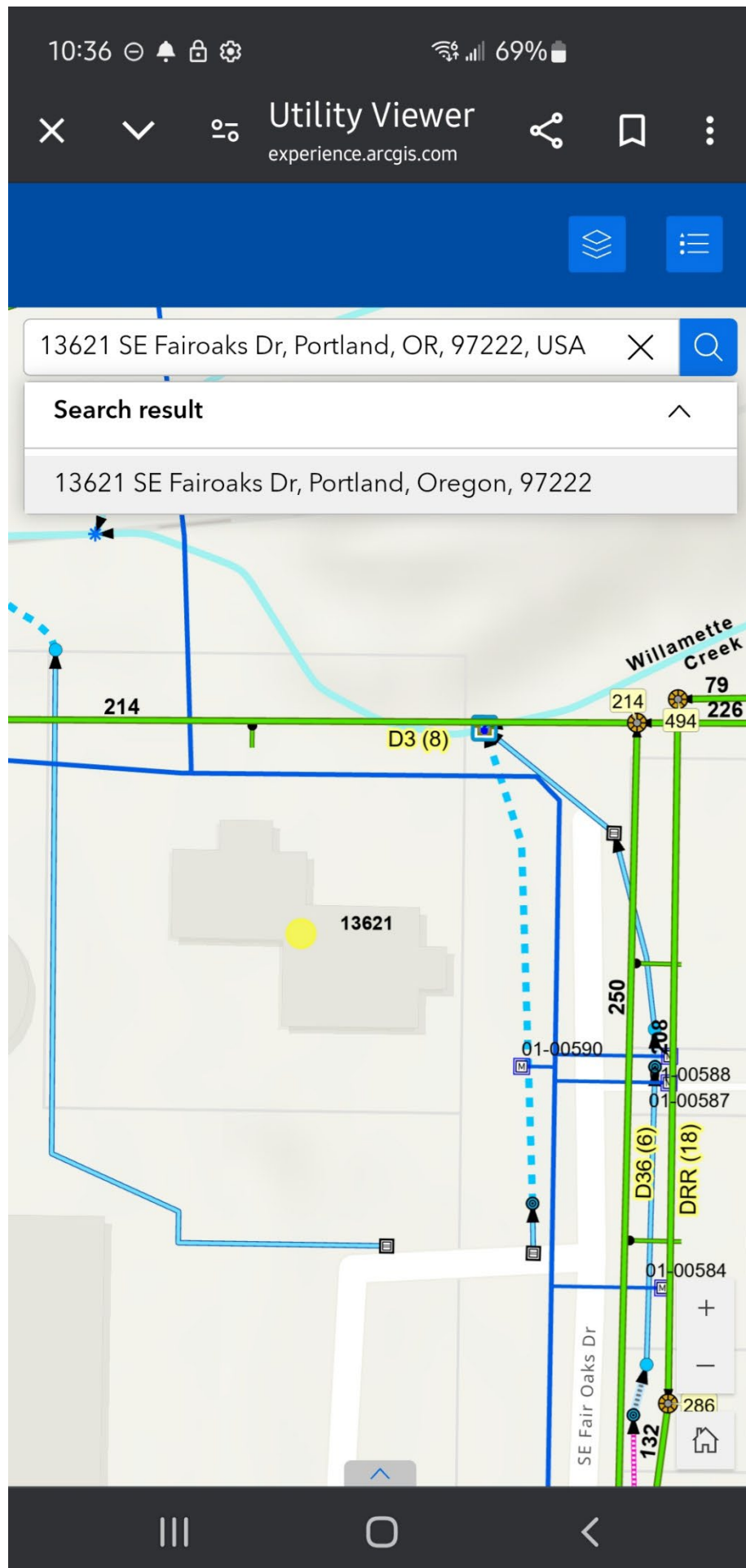
Not only am dealing with my own property damages and physical conditions, but Xfinity just got permits to start their repairs from the OG-LO Train Trestle Fire and the railroad is planning more extensive bridge repairs to start in the coming weeks. This is going to disperse lots more creosote dust into the air, onto my property, and into Willamette Creek & Wetland.

I would like help with restoration efforts along with improved water drainage quality for Willamette Creek, on and surrounding my property.

I also request help identifying if my garden and fruit trees are safe to eat (previously organic) or what needs to happen to make it safe for my property and wildlife. I lost all my garden crops and tree fruit last year from the fire. Now some plants are struggling to survive while others have died completely, and I got no fruit production this year.

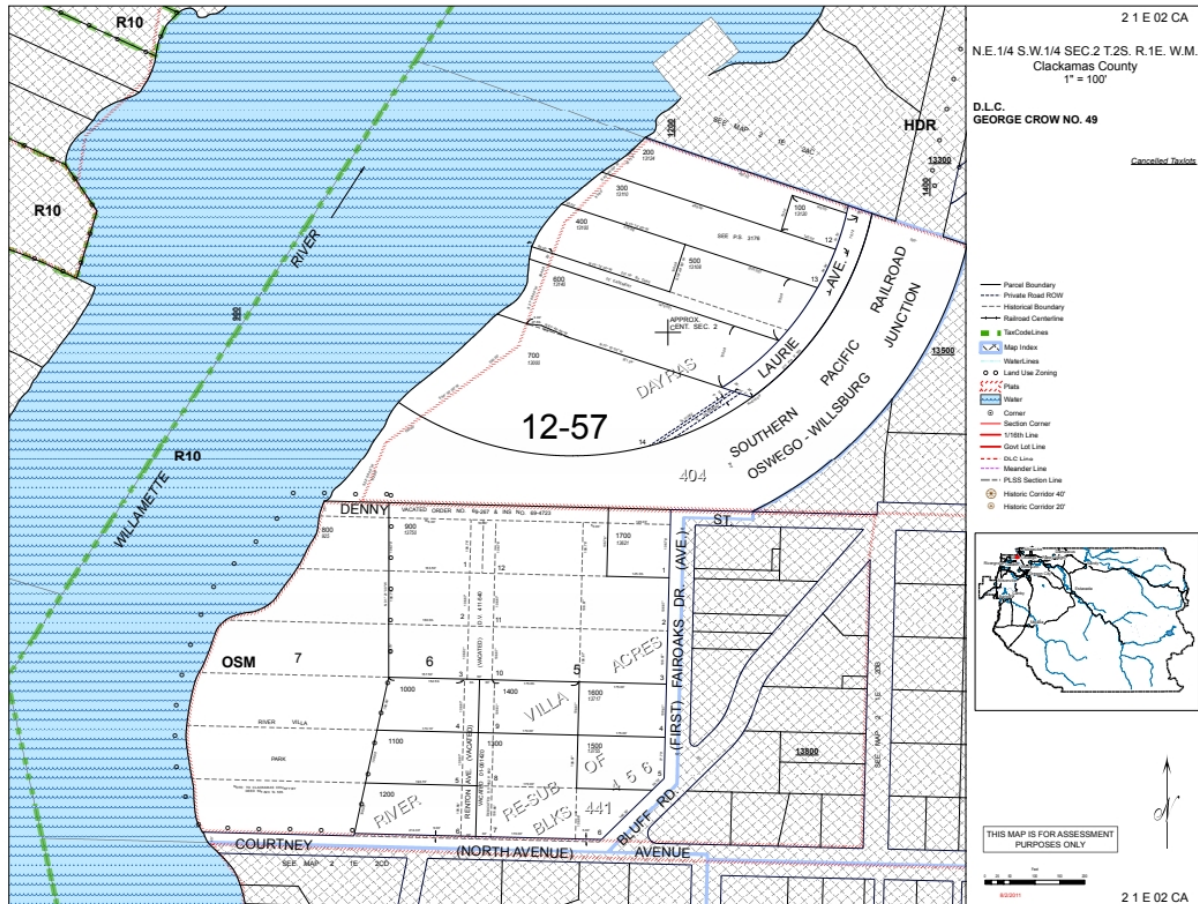
I am not able to manage all this on my own and really need help. Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to attending the first OERC meeting and seeing steps towards resolve.

Link to video: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/QLSGQijGkVQeKFoF9>





Public Comment from Jennifer "Jenna" Smith of Oak Grove, OR for the October 9, 2025 OERC Meeting





























**James Fraser**

Oregon Policy Director, [james.fraser@tu.org](mailto:james.fraser@tu.org), (971) 278-8085

October 9, 2025

Oregon Environmental Restoration Council

*Copy of comments delivered verbally on 10/9/25*

**Re: Trout Unlimited input for 1st Meeting of the Oregon Environmental Restoration Council**

Co-Chairs Dembrow and Sams, Vice-Chair Holliday, and Members of the Council:

My name is James Fraser and I'm the Oregon Policy Director at Trout Unlimited. Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment during the first meeting of this body. I'm honored and pleased to join you here today.

TU is a non-profit dedicated to conserving coldwater fish (such as trout, salmon, and steelhead) and their habitats. We have more than 350,000 members and supporters nationwide, including many members in Oregon.

We also have about 20 full-time staff in the state, most of whom are project managers that spend their days restoring fish habitat, addressing fish passage issues, and working collaboratively with water right holders to lease and transfer water instream to benefit native species.

I'd like to use my time to talk about TU's interest and involvement in matters related to this Council and its Fund *to date*, and our perspectives on next steps and the future, especially with regard to the State Agency Program Fund.

**TU supported Senate Bill 1561, which established this program during the 2024 session. At its only public hearing, in Senate Natural Resources on February 8, 2024, we were one of 5 NGOs to testify on the legislation and the means of implementing the related settlement agreement in Oregon law. TU has been involved from the beginning of the public process, and we'd like to remain involved as you move forward.**

This program has the opportunity to achieve a tremendous amount of good work for Oregon over the next half century in the areas of conservation, environmental justice, and pollution abatement.

Trout Unlimited has 3 suggestions for you as the Council moves forward:

**Number 1: Account for and prioritize the full scope of the settlement's purposes.** Section 18 of the settlement expressly includes a broad scope of environmental restoration, natural resource conservation, work that's good for wildlife, and habitat protection efforts. This includes "restoration or protection of wildlife or wildlife habitats" separately from any direct benefit to human communities. We urge that you ensure parity between this conservation purpose and the other Fund purposes related to environmental justice and pollution abatement.

**Number 2: Take the time to make fully-informed decisions in setting the strategic priorities.** Section 9 of SB 1561 sets a floor for determining these, whereby the Council must compile data, hold a public hearing, and receive public comment before making a decision. TU recommends that as part of this

process, the Council invite natural resource agencies to present on the current status of initiatives related to the settlement's purposes, and describe key needs and opportunities related to the State Agency Fund.

**Number 3: Involve the public and stakeholders in rulemaking advisory committees related to implementing SB 1561.** I'll say right now that Trout Unlimited is interested in serving on a RAC related to the State Agency Program Fund – as there's so much important work to do, and so many new things we could be doing. Like my previous about Strategic Priorities, we'd urge that you take the time to invite public input on these issues as you prepare related administrative rules.

We appreciate each of you and the chance to join the Council's first meeting. Thank you.

Sincerely,

James Fraser  
Oregon Policy Director  
Trout Unlimited  
[james.fraser@tu.org](mailto:james.fraser@tu.org)