



OREGON
ENVIRONMENTAL
RESTORATION
FUND

Oregon Environmental Restoration Council Meeting

Wednesday, September 16, 2026

1:00 pm – 4:00 pm

Submitted Written Public Comment

Name	Topic
Oregon Environmental Council	Oregon Environmental Restoration Fund Strategic Priorities



Founded in 1968, the Oregon Environmental Council (OEC) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, membership-based organization. We advance equitable, innovative, and collaborative solutions to Oregon's environmental challenges for today and future generations.

Oregon Environmental Council Support and Feedback for Oregon Environmental Restoration Fund Strategic Priorities

Dear Co-Chairs Sams and Dembrow, and members of the Oregon Environmental Restoration Council,

The Oregon Environmental Restoration Fund ("Fund") represents a historic funding opportunity to accelerate projects and purposes that benefit Oregon's environment and its communities. Born from decades of pollution and contamination that have harmed Oregon families, communities, and ecosystems, the Oregon Environmental Restoration Council ("OERC") has a generational opportunity and responsibility to distribute funds to Tribes, communities, and state agencies that yield the highest impact outcomes. This is especially true for Oregon communities that have been disproportionately impacted by harms to air, water, soil or other natural resources or human health caused by environmental contamination, particularly the presence of PCBs.

Within this context, OEC appreciates the time, energy, and effort that OERC members and staff have put into developing strategic priorities for this Fund. OEC supports projects that meet the intent of the Monsanto settlement agreement and basis of this Fund:

"Such environmental remediation or restitutionary projects or purposes include restoring, maintaining and enhancing the quality of Oregon's air, land, water and other natural resources and will consist of projects having a nexus or connection with brownfields remediation or redevelopment, environmental or natural resource damage assessment or restoration, improvements to air and water quality, cleanup of contaminated sites, remediation of impaired waterbodies, sediments, or soil, or restoration or protection of wildlife or wildlife habitats, including fish, aquatic life, marine mammal, or bird habitats, but may also include at the State's sole discretion other similar air, water, soil, or natural resource environmental remediation or restitutionary projects or purposes within the scope of the projects and purposes described above."

Given the broad array of potential project applications, OEC appreciates that OERC and staff are engaged in a thoughtful process to set OERF strategic priorities. OEC recommends that OERC grounds strategic priorities in natural resource remediation or restitution, environmental justice, and human health. In practice, this means prioritizing projects at the nexus of these three focus areas and, ideally, having the Agency Program Fund ("APF") and Community Impact Fund ("CIF") complement or overlap to accelerate impact in these areas. This means dollars are allocated to projects that have outsized environmental and social benefits relative to the costs incurred. Moreover, project outcomes based on strategic priorities must be measurable, verified, and regularly evaluated.

APF and CIF funds must be stewarded transparently, efficiently, and reflective of community priorities. Upfront time and resource investment in identifying community needs, then deploying APF and CIF dollars for projects that reflect community priorities will be dividends over the lifetime of these Funds. Additionally, CIF is uniquely positioned to act as a source of seed or stackable funding with other grants, while serving as a flexible resource for projects to reinforce resilience, adaptation, and mitigation. Both APF and CIF may benefit from consulting Oregon's Environmental Justice Mapping Tool once it is finalized.² Finally, natural resource agencies should be funded with existing budget mechanisms and not use OERF resources to backfill agency budget gaps.

OEC recommends a broader, independent evaluation of the OERF program every 5 years. As a part of this evaluation, OERC should have the option to accelerate spending to accelerate impact; change strategic

1

2

priorities; and/or change APF and CIF total percentage allocations. OEC recognizes there may need to be statutory changes for program improvements, which OERC should consider as a part of holistic OERF program evaluations. Finally, OEC recommends that any OERF investments be screened for high-polluting companies, and OERF investments be decreased or withdrawn from these companies while maintaining fiscal sustainability.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the OERC's strategic priorities. We look forward to staying engaged in this critical work.

Sincerely,

Sarah Clark
Deputy Director for Programs
Oregon Environmental Council
sarahc@oeonline.org