

# Draft climate plan excludes carbon sequestration

Although originally included, it was dropped at the last meeting in July

By George Plaven  
EO Media Group

A new program aimed at significantly curbing Oregon's greenhouse gas emissions is coming under criticism for omitting investments that could help farms and forests sequester more carbon from the atmosphere.

The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality released draft rules for the Climate Protection Program on Aug. 5 — similar to cap-and-trade legislation thwarted twice in the state Legislature by Senate Republicans who fled the Capitol to deny a vote.

After the second walkout in 2020, Gov. Kate Brown signed an executive order requiring Oregon DEQ and other state agencies to take action on harmful emissions, targeting a 45% reduction below 1990 levels by 2035 and 80% below 1990 levels by 2050.

Like cap and trade, the Climate Protection Program sets a limit on emissions that gradually lowers each year.

Part of the program also allows regulated utilities and fuel suppliers to buy or trade offset credits to meet their reduction goals, referred to as "community climate investments," or CCIs.

CCIs would pay for a



A new Oregon state program aimed at curbing greenhouse gas emissions is under criticism for omitting investments that could help farms and forests sequester carbon from the atmosphere.

Contributed photo/Oregon Department of Forestry

variety of projects to transition Oregonians from fossil fuels to cleaner, more sustainable sources of energy, said Colin McConnaha, who manages Oregon DEQ's Office of Greenhouse Gas Programs.

However, McConnaha said it will not subsidize carbon sequestration on natural and working lands, such as through no-till farming and the planting of cover crops. While DEQ is not opposed to carbon sequestration, McConnaha said the primary focus of the program is reducing fossil fuels in homes, vehicles and businesses.

"The primary drawback in

the context of this program is simply that it would take funding away from investments in hastening Oregon's clean energy transition," McConnaha said.

That decision is not sitting well with some members of the rules advisory committee tasked with helping DEQ to develop the draft rules.

Jan Lee, executive director of the Oregon Association of Conservation Districts, said carbon sequestration is not only a critical tool for addressing climate change, but can benefit rural communities that are disproportionately impacted by creating health-

ier, more resilient landscapes.

Lee said from the beginning the committee discussed carbon sequestration within the CCI program. Then, at the final meeting in July, it was suddenly removed without explanation.

"It was very difficult at the end to drop it out," said Lee, whose association represents 45 soil and water conservation districts across Oregon. "Sequestration was one of the few things that could be done in rural areas to deal with the impact of climate change."

Under Gov. Brown's executive order, the Oregon Global Warming Commission has

**"IF YOU LEAVE OUT SEQUESTRATION, THE RURAL COMMUNITIES AREN'T GOING TO BE ABLE TO SHARE IN THIS MONEY."**

—Wallowa County Commissioner John Hillock

also drafted a natural and working lands proposal that calls for a net sequestration of 9.5 million metric tons of carbon dioxide per year by 2050.

Not connecting sequestration with the Climate Protection Program's source of funding "is a big missed opportunity," Lee said.

The Climate Protection Program sets the initial price of CCIs at \$81 per metric ton of carbon. At 9.5 million metric tons, that adds up to \$769.5 million worth of investment that could be coming in to rural Oregon, said Wallowa County Commissioner John Hillock.

"If you leave out sequestration, the rural communities aren't going to be able to share in this money," Hillock said.

Jeff Stone, executive director of the Oregon Association of Nurseries, said he was likewise disappointed to see carbon sequestration excluded from the draft rules.

If the Climate Protection Plan has winners and losers, the question then becomes what Oregon wants its economy to look like in 25-30 years, Stone said.

"We should be doing things that enhance agricul-

ture, and that enhances carbon sequestration," Stone said. "I think there's a missed opportunity here in trying to build more bridges rather than walls between urban and rural."

McConnaha, with Oregon DEQ, insists the program will prioritize rural communities while maintaining the focus on transitioning to cleaner fuels.

For example, he said many rural households and businesses — including agriculture and forestry — have a tougher challenge switching to cleaner modes of transportation since they often have to travel longer distances and traverse rough terrain.

"This makes helping enable that switch to cleaner transportation especially important for these communities," he said.

A 60-day public comment period is currently underway for the Climate Protection Program, ending Oct. 4. DEQ will also hold two virtual public hearings to discuss the proposal on Sept. 22 and Sept. 30.

Final rules need to be approved by the Environmental Quality Commission before going into effect as early as next year.

# Rangeland study to address impact of drought, predators on ranching

Six sites in Idaho and Oregon will be equipped with 50 cameras

By Brad Carlson  
EO Media Group

A University of Idaho-led team next month will start studying how drought and wolves impact rangeland and the people who live and raise livestock there.

A \$1.6 million National Science Foundation grant is funding the five-year project. It includes collaborators from the University of Michigan, Ohio State University and the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Researchers will study six sites in Idaho and Oregon, each equipped with 50 cameras. The team aims to find out more about how drought affects vegetation and in turn livestock, deer, elk and their interactions with predators. Scientists also will explore the impacts wolves and drought have on ranching communities and rangeland.

"We'll look at the interactions between wolves and

drought, and how those affect wild ungulate populations as well as livestock and people who live there," lead investigator Sophie Gilbert, a UI assistant professor of wildlife ecology and management, said.

She said the study will examine the interconnectedness of humans, plants and animals on rangeland in the face of a changing climate and other stressors.

Rangeland and the people who live and work on it are seeing multiple stressors at once, Gilbert said in an interview. Drought, wildfire, livestock market challenges and the return of large carnivores in an environment where they were absent for decades are examples.

"This group has been talking and talking for years," she said. "We wanted to put together a proposal to

explore how multiple sources of stress interact with each other and affect humans and wildlife trying to make a living."

She said the integrated approach aims in part to benefit ranchers, land and wildlife managers as they make decisions. For example, findings may result in a more thorough understanding where predators are and how they move, and the amount of forage

available to livestock, deer and elk.

"Something we're going to try to do is produce a mobile app that produces a forecast of key rangeland conditions," Gilbert said.

It would build on existing applications by linking satellite data to wildlife images on the cameras. Ideally, she said, it would help forecast forage supply, greenness and competition — and possibly concentration of predators, livestock and other animals

in riparian areas in drought conditions.

Gilbert said this year's work will include holding workshops with ranchers.

"The ranchers are going to be the ones who know the information they need," she said. "Those concerns are going to be really important."

Cameras will be placed in late spring and early summer. Sites will be selected based in part on different levels of drought and wolf activity, Gilbert said.

**"WE'LL LOOK AT THE INTERACTIONS BETWEEN WOLVES AND DROUGHT, AND HOW THOSE AFFECT WILD UNGULATE POPULATIONS AS WELL AS LIVESTOCK AND PEOPLE WHO LIVE THERE."**

—Lead investigator Sophie Gilbert, a UI assistant professor of wildlife ecology and management

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Hello Grant County,  
Well, it almost seems that Fall is in the air. The cooler temperatures have been nice!

In light of the recent COVID outbreak, I hope you are staying well.  
Just a reminder – we still have a good supply of face masks and gloves if you need them. Just come by the office and pick them up.

The Chamber Board of Directors has decided to postpone the Grape and Grain Celebration until possibly next Spring. We are planning a very nice event and we want to have it at a time when we will all feel comfortable about getting together.

We have just completed the revisions for the Chamber By-laws. The Board will be approving them at the September Board meeting.

This month's Chamber Board meeting will be Thursday, September 16th at 10:30 at the Chamber office.

If you haven't checked out our new logo merchandise, you should! We have t-shirts and sweatshirts, hats, stickers, coffee mugs, lapel pins, and our challenge coins should be here any day!

We would like to thank everyone who stopped by the Chamber's Fair booth. It was nice to see everyone and hear your comments about our new swag!

If you haven't joined the Chamber yet, you should really consider it! Come by the office and pick up an application.  
Stay healthy and safe!

Tammy Bremner  
Executive Director

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