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## **IN MY OPINION THE SUSTAINABILITY INDUSTRY At the creative core of Oregon's future**

Now that the U.N. climate change conference in Bali, Indonesia, is over, it's time to consider what was accomplished -and how the results affect Oregonians, who are known to be a bit prickly on the topic of climate anyway.

There was a breakthrough of sorts in Bali. The United States finally participated in the global warming dialog, even if it did so reluctantly. While solid, measurable commitments remained elusive, what finally ruffled the administration's implacable resistance were the clearly shifting winds of change. When Washington finally blinked in Bali, it was more than sheer exhaustion. It was a precursor for a likely sea change in our climate change policies.

For Oregonians, that presents an opportunity to play a leading role in the emerging sustainability industry. But there's a lot more to it than Oregon's highly visible biofuels plants, wind turbine farms, wave-energy projects and solar array producers. At the core of this new industry are a cadre of innovative architectural and consulting firms coaxing together the ingredients that will spark new forms of energy production, new forms of distribution, innovative business models and best practices that will transform today's inefficiencies into tomorrow's sustainable businesses.

Already Oregon is attracting "young creatives" wanting to earn their reputations by laying the innovative tracks upon which the state's new sustainable economy will run. A good example of Oregon's leadership in this field is Trexler Climate + Energy Services, which in 1991 pioneered climate change corporate strategy and climate change mitigation consulting from Portland. Despite having few North American customers for many years, the firm stayed in Portland. Now part of EcoSecurities, these Portland-based specialists are involved in all aspects of the rapidly evolving global carbon market.

The list of Oregon companies developing the core ideas, best practices and services for the sustainability industry is extensive. Creative shops are the core of the new industry in Oregon, and they deserve both government recognition and support if the state is to find its place as a leader in this new sector.

In 2007 the Legislature established the Oregon Bio-Economy and Sustainable Technologies Research Center --in short, Oregon BEST --to serve as the vehicle for supporting the state's emerging sustainability sector. Oregon BEST has announced that it plans to focus its \$3 million investment on engineering of alternative energy and bio-based products while looking for yet-to-be-discovered energy sources. But this strategy overlooks the Oregon engineering and service companies that are building the systemic, analytical and practical foundations of the new industry.

Many of these companies are developing the "green metrics" by which to measure sustainability in our factories, forests, vineyards, service companies and local governments. They are introducing accountability to sustainable development in much the same way the LEEDS standards did for the building industry. Oregon BEST should support the creative core of this new industry, not just the trendy projects splashed across the news pages.

It's been said that things that are measured tend to improve. So let's build upon Oregon's demonstrated leadership in measurement technologies and become the leader in green metrics. Let Oregon invest in building a robust framework for measuring sustainability and thereby stimulate another emerging industry while lightening our imprint as we go forward.

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