



HB 2656 – STRONGLY OPPOSE

Dear Chair Ken Helm and committee members;

HB 2656 allows total government control over watershed areas, requires a written plan for forest operations on forestland that supplies drinking water for one or more public water systems. It's an overreach of government leading to complete closure of lands under Agenda 21. It establishes "Best practices" without proven results. Limits State Board of Forestry from implementing proven best practices, and deliberately limits the application of established best forestry management practices for activities on forestland that supplies drinking water.

HB 2656 decimates the ability of private landowners to actively manage Oregon's working forests. Private forests are currently managed under a suite of state and federal regulations protective of water quality. Maintaining the productive use of private forests is critical to the economic and social stability of many Oregon counties and communities.

- HB 2656 supplants the Oregon Forest Practices Act, making Oregon more restrictive than California. California is experiencing the worst fire conditions in state history and is currently looking for ways to increase harvest levels to decrease fire risk and protect communities. Would also prohibit building of forest roads needed to combat fires.

- HB 2656 shuts down working private forests, which sustainably produces 78 percent of Oregon's timber harvest, supports over 100 manufacturers and employs more than 60,000 Oregonians in rural counties and communities across the state.

- HB 2656 forces private management practices to mimic those on federal forests, where overstocked, diseased and inaccessible landscapes have generated 80

percent of acres lost to fire over the past decade. Carbon emissions from wildfire smoke emit millions of metric tons of air pollution, are costly to rural economies, and negatively impact Oregonians' health.

- HB 2656 removes Oregon from its position as the number one softwood lumber and plywood producer in the country, shuttering the United States' primary source of renewable, carbon friendly building products, to be replaced by other producers of alternative products in other states and countries.

- HB 2656 provides almost unchecked opportunity for non-native, invasive weeds such as Scotch broom, Himalayan blackberry and Japanese knotweed to flourish, choking young trees, forest roads and riparian areas, impacting fire protection and wildlife habitat.

- HB 2656 increases the cost of managing forest landscapes, encouraging forestland conversion to other land uses.

Please consider attending the hearing and/or sending a message to the Committee.

We strongly support a NO vote.

Donna Bleiler
FAST LEGACY