

March 12, 2019

Testimony before the Oregon House of Representatives Energy and Environment Committee

Chair Helm and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to share some comments on House Bill 2656.

My name is Peter Sikora and I am the CEO of Giustina Resources in Springfield, Oregon. We manage Giustina family owned forestland in western Oregon. The Giustina family has actively and sustainably managed private forestland in Oregon for nearly 100 years.

About half of our state is forestland and 60% of that is owned by the federal government. Privately owned timberlands comprise just 36% of the total forested acres in our state. It's that 36% that produces more than three-quarters of the state's lumber, supplies logs to more than 100 mills in the state and employs more than 60,000 Oregonians in solid family wage jobs that often pay 50 to 90 percent higher than the local average wage.

This activity comes with environmental responsibility and stewardship, provided by landowners working with ODF Foresters to protect sensitive resource sites, wildlife, monitor spray operations, require reforestation, and ensure compliance and effectiveness of the Forest Practices Act, itself. Oregon Department of Environmental Quality data confirms that forestland, including that with active management, produces the highest quality water of any land use in the state.

That's on private land. The other two-thirds of forestland in Oregon is already managed for primary purposes *other than* timber production. Much of this land is in federal ownership, with limited to no harvest at all. Over the past decade, 85 percent of the acres that burned in wildfires in Oregon were on federal ground. Longer, hotter, and drier fire seasons are a factor, but they are a factor for private lands as well. What is different is that 25 years ago timber harvest on federal lands dropped about 90% and currently only about 8% of annual forest growth is harvested but 36% is lost to mortality – mainly fire. Additionally, hundreds of miles of roads have been decommissioned on these lands limiting efficient fire access.

Based on my knowledge and experience as a forester, the severe limitations in HB 2656 will create serious unintended consequences – among them, increased risk of wildfire.

Every year we make significant investments in the future of our forest resources. This year Giustina Resources will invest in the future by planting over 1.2 million seedlings and we will nurture those trees over the next 50+ years until they reach maturity. Through those years we face a multitude of environmental, economic, legal, and political risks.

In the environmental category, no risk is greater than the potential loss from uncontrolled wildfire. Our fire risk mitigation strategy is quite comprehensive. This strategy, along with active participation in Oregon's Complete and Coordinated System has been very effective in protecting our forest resources.

Part of the reason fewer acres have burned on private forestland in the past decade is because:

- We manage fuels through thinning and regeneration harvests, which this bill would ban, and
- We develop and maintain a strong road network to facilitate active management and fire access. This bill would ban that as well.

In absence of this level of active management and investment, the forest will ultimately be “managed” by fire instead as we are seeing on federal lands.

The proponents of this bill claim HB 2656 will protect water quality. The truth is, wildfires degrade water quality by introducing massive amounts of sedimentation into surface water, increasing costs for drinking water filtration. But increased sedimentation isn't the only result.

When the rains finally came to the deadly Camp Fire in California, they not only put out the fire, they also introduced pollutants into the region's creeks and rivers. The city of Paradise is still under a water quality advisory and residents must use bottled water for drinking, brushing teeth and cooking. The same thing happened in Santa Rosa after the devastating Tubbs Fire in 2017.

That's a **real** risk to water quality.

I appreciate your time and attention and would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

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