

Lauri <smousehouse@casco.net>

House Energy and Environment Committee:

My husband and I are very concerned over HB 2656 and would like to submit to your committee our concerns. My husband has worked in the timber industry in Oregon for almost 50 years and I have been involved in our small family owned business throughout the years. Our experience gives us firsthand knowledge as to how private forests are actually managed. It appears to us the people who have brought forward this house bill do not understand current forest practices within our state or the actual results we are seeing from properly managed private forest lands

Oregon's private forests are currently managed under the Oregon Forest Practices Act, which is well respected throughout the United States as an effective, science based set of rules and regulations. My husband sees this by the fact that the DEQ has data confirming the best water quality in Oregon comes from our forested watersheds, including those with active management. He can personally attest to the fact that water quality is one of the key factors taken into consideration before any road construction, harvest operation, or pesticide application begins. His practices can be witness by being named 2006 Operator of the Year by the OR State Forestry Dept (Excellent Logging Through Stream Riparian Area). Loggers do not take the above issues lightly and are proud of the stewardship of Oregon forests and lands they strive to achieve.

As we are all aware, California is experiencing the worst fire conditions in the state's history and they are currently looking for ways to increase their harvest levels to decrease fire risk. We do not want our state to end up in the same conditions. In addition, the potential for increased fires seems to be at odds with the concerns the state has for carbon reduction and greenhouse gas emissions as we have heard from the Joint Committee On Carbon Reduction with HB 2020. HB 2656 would override the Oregon Forest Practices Act, enacting more restrictions on our private forests than California's.

Our family wants Oregon to continue to have productive forests that provide for water quality, clean air, wildlife habitat, carbon sequestration, recreation opportunities, and jobs to thousands of Oregonians. We want Oregon to continue to be the number one softwood lumber producer in the country. We want Oregon to continue to have healthy forests that are not over stocked, diseased, inaccessible, and a fire risk to our state. We want the committee to know that the managers of private forest lands today are continuing to improve ownerships to make our water quality better than it has been in the past. We have personally seen projects that upgraded legacy road systems by adding cross drains, improving road surfacing, and upgrading stream crossings to make them fish passable. We continue to use the most advanced and sustainable logging practices that minimize ground disturbance and environmental impacts. We can also personally attest to the fact that Oregon is continually striving to increase and improve our forests by planting areas that were previously non-forested or only growing brush. The forest land managers within our state are true stewards of the land and are improving the quality of our forests.

My husband and I are truly concerned that this house bill has been brought forward by people who do not understand how private forest land is currently being managed, or that we have laws and regulations in place that govern our forest activities. It concerns us that we could end up with a law based on a lack of understanding, compounded by misinformation presented by the media. There is no science based evidence showing a problem exists that would require the changes brought forward in this bill. HB 2656 does not make sense for Oregon. My husband and I are in strong opposition of HB 2656.

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