

Raszka Shelley

From: ggce@aol.com
Sent: Thursday, March 21, 2019 5:11 PM
To: Exhibits HNR
Subject: HB 2659 Will Harm Oregon

March 21, 2019

Dear Chairman Witt and Committee Members,

Re: HB 2659 Will Harm Oregon

We are writing today to testify on record as opposing HB 2659. This legislation is ideologically driven to empower self-serving Portland environmental activists. Don't be confused with their use of pseudo-science to promote their whimsical view of "natural forests". This unscientific bill is filled with random measures that will punish forest owners who have invested a life's work of tending our lands. HB 2659 will not only disrupt Oregon's long standing land use protection laws, but harm the economy, rural forest owners, workers and the forest itself.

Our family owns and sustainably manages forests in the coastal mountains of Lane and Douglas Counties. We harvest about one-fifth of our mature timber each decade. Over the past century there have been numerous occasions for harvest and reforestation on our property. During our time we have promoted healthy wildlife habitat, encouraged native species and protected healthy streams and pure water flowing from our forests. Every day our even-aged forests cleanse the air and grow the world's best carbon neutral building material from native forest species.

Decades ago, Oregon's Legislature realized the importance of property tax incentives to encourage growth of private forests. The current tax model was adopted in recognition of the public benefit realized by maintaining forests over other potential development land uses. Family owned managed forests and their on-going environmental and economic benefits are a boon to rural and urban citizens alike.

Punitive measures like HB 2659 seeking to discourage forest management are bad policy. One only needs to look at California to confirm that overgrown, diseased forests are a recipe for calamity. Overzealous restrictions on harvest combined with declining forest health have led to unintended, yet disastrous consequences. California is now looking for ways to encourage harvesting to mitigate fire risk.

HB 2659 relies on invented nonsense terms such as "natural", "semi-natural", "non-forest" or "plantation" to describe goals for forest management. This simplistic approach is devoid of any scientific basis and suggests promotion of the failed "hands off" approach that has confounded care of our federal forests.

We should seek policies supportive of growth and economic investment for healthy and renewable forests. Timber should be taxed like other commodities, encouraging stewardship and the long view of forest production. The present balance between land-use protections and private working forests has served the state well.

Pretending the concepts in HB 2659 are good science doesn't make it so. Regenerated forests following Oregon's Forest Practice Laws contribute to Oregon's healthy environment and desirable forest conditions. Having a variety of forest settings across the landscape is beneficial to wildlife, recreation, and the many forest values enjoyed by all Oregonians.

HB 2659 is bad legislation that promotes a “Pollyanna” notion of the serious considerations of forest management, land use goals and our rural economy. This is not a positive use of the legislative effort. We share many concerns about Oregon’s future; promotion of another bill placing rural and urban Oregon at odds just isn’t constructive.

Sincerely,

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