

April 15, 2019

Rep. Nancy Nathanson
900 Court St NE, H-276
Salem, Oregon 97301

Re: **Opposition to House Bill 2495**

Dear Representative Nathanson:

We request that this letter be entered into the public record on this matter. We are opposed to the passage of House Bill 2495. We understand that you are the chairperson of the committee that will be considering this bill. As we understand it, this bill subjects small woodland owners to increased financial burdens by shifting more of the costs of fighting forest fires to them, as well as adversely affects the current forest product harvest tax system.

First, a little background about us. My wife and I are retired, and we own and manage about 84 acres of forestland in western Oregon near Estacada, which we have been doing for almost 30 years. We are proud of our forest stewardship, and have conducted tours of our forest for the Clackamas County Farm Forestry Association and the Clackamas River Basin Council, among other organizations. Additionally, I have been a lecturer at the OSU Extension Service Clackamas Tree School, and I am currently a director of the Clackamas County Farm Forestry Association. We actively manage our forest for many requirements and uses, ranging from periodic timber harvesting to wildlife habitat, recreation and riparian (relating to or situated on or near the banks of a river) needs. For many years we have also endeavored to follow best management practices to minimize the risk due to forest fire hazards by pruning lower limbs of our trees (to minimize ladder fuels), minimizing tree density (by maintaining more optimal spacing between trees to favor growth and reduce stress) and to minimize potential fuels on the ground (by removing excessive slash).

In our opinion, the following issues arise from the current version of HB 2495:

1. HB 2495 would disrupt the forest product harvest tax system, which currently provides funds for essential programs to support fire, forest practices, and forest science research, which are important to all Oregonians.
2. HB 2495 would remove the biennial sunset which provides flexibility to adjust these important programs as needed.
3. HB 2495 would shift more of the state's responsibilities in the Wildfire Protection Act to landowners who already pay for the majority of costs in protecting Oregon's forests from fire.

Particularly with regards to the complexities surrounding how Oregon currently battles forest fires, we understand the Governor Brown has convened, through executive order, a Wildfire Response Council. This 19 member group of experts is due to complete their list of findings and recommendations on or about September 30, 2019. Therefore, why would a bill be considered now that attempts to address these issues before all the Wildfire Response Council's information is in on how to strategically, fairly (we hope) and effectively deal with an issue that really affects all Oregonians, not merely those who own forestland? Variables pertaining to forestland such as geographic location (i.e. properties in eastern versus western Oregon, which have vastly different wildfire risks), topography, proximity to urban areas or to the more wildfire hazard-prone national forests, and those who implement best management practices versus those who do not, among other factors, should be considered prior to changing how fighting wildfires are paid for. We understand that most western states recognize that all citizens reap the benefits, to varying degrees, from all forestland (e.g. clean air and water, carbon sequestration, recreation, wildlife habitat, etc.) in a state, and as such, the responsibility to cover the cost for fighting wildfires typically rests with all taxpayers.

In summary, we find that HB 2495, as currently written, particularly with regards to private forest landowners, is excessively burdensome. We believe that HB 2495 should be withdrawn from further consideration.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "David Bugni". The signature is fluid and cursive.A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mary Ann Bugni". The signature is fluid and cursive.

David & Mary Ann Bugni
30265 SE Kowall Rd.
Estacada, OR 97023
503-502-7213

cc: Representative Anna Williams (our representative)
Senator Chuck Thomsen (our state senator)