



Woodland Owners Who Love Their Land

April 16, 2019

Re: Opposition to HB 2495

Chair Nathanson and members of the House Revenue Committee,

My name is Mike Barsotti. I am a Linn County family forest landowner, president of the Oregon Small Woodlands Association (OSWA), and a member of the Governor's Council on Wildfire Response - Suppression Subcommittee. OSWA is opposed to HB 2495 for a number of reasons. They include:

- A tremendous amount of effort is and will be put into responding to the Governor's approach to getting a complete picture on how best the state can address wildfires. It seems unwise to make changes to a part of our state's current funding strategy before the Council on Wildfire Response completes its tasks.
- The 2013 Wildfire Protection Act took a comprehensive approach to the funding of wildfires in Oregon. HB 2495 attempts to shift a greater percentage of the funding for wildfire suppression to forest landowners with no discussion or data to support the shift. Data on who starts forest fires shows that the percentage of human cause fires started by forest landowner is very low. A case could be made that the public should pay a greater percentage, not less.
- The current Harvest Tax funds a number of efforts toward maintaining healthy, sustainable forests in Oregon, and the current strategy of revisiting the amount of each effort every two years has been an effective way to adjust funding as each effort's costs change. Making appropriate changes to the Harvest Tax more difficult by making it permanent defeats this strategy. Changes in our laws are designed to move us forward, not backwards as HB 2495 will do.

I ask you to defeat this misguided attempt to short circuit the efforts of the Governor's Council on Wildfire Response, to shift without a justification the costs of suppressing wildfires to forest landowners, and to modify an existing law that is not broken.