

February 10, 2020

Chair Senator Golden  
Senate Committee on Wildfire Reduction and Recovery  
State Capitol 900 Court Street NE  
Salem, OR 97301

Chair Golden, Vice-Chair Baertschiger, and members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony today about Senate Bill 1514. My name is Alexander Harris – I work with Cascadia Wildlands and a collection of other conservation and climate advocacy non-profits throughout Oregon. I grew up in rural Jackson County and have personal experience with the threats posed by wildfire. My comments are informed by the scientific literature, as well as the empathy I feel for rural Oregonians struggling with this challenge.

Thank you for all your hard work on this bill so far. I am especially appreciative of the amendments introduced by Senator Golden that ensure fuels reduction activities stay out of ecologically sensitive areas such as wilderness study areas, roadless areas, and areas designated as critical habitat for endangered species.

I would like to propose a minor addition to the bill that would help ensure that fuel treatments covered by this legislation prioritize the forests that pose the greatest risk to homes and communities. **Specifically, I propose adding language that explicitly prioritizes fuel treatments in even-aged forests that have been previously subjected to clearcut logging.** I propose the following amendment (*bolded below*):

*SB 1514-3, SECTION 1*

*Subsection (2): The State Forestry Department shall:*

*(b) To the extent practicable, design the projects to:*

***(D) prioritize fuel treatments in even-aged forests in close proximity to communities.***

Researchers have found that monoculture, even-aged trees planted tightly together after clearcutting (also known as “plantations”) are more prone to uncharacteristically severe wildfire than older, native forests. In fact, [one recent study](#) conducted in southwestern Oregon found that plantations owned by timber corporations burn 30% more severely than older forests on public lands (Zald & Dunn, 2018).

Scientists have also found that logging backcountry areas does nothing to protect people from fire risks (Schoennagel, et al. 2017) . Cascadia Wildlands, and the organizations we work with, fully recognize science-based fuels reduction treatments in priority areas directly adjacent to homes and communities can help reduce fire risk under certain

conditions. However, thinning forests far away from communities does absolutely nothing to protect people and property from fire, as documented by countless studies. Our forests are vast, and fire is unpredictable, and therefore treatments must be focused on forests directly adjacent to where people actually live if they are to have any impact on community safety.

A bill seeking to protect communities from severe wildfires should prioritize treating plantations close to where people actually live. I would be more than happy to provide more information if helpful, please do not hesitate to reach out.

Thanks again for all that you do, I appreciate you considering our viewpoints.

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