



To: Members of the House Committee on Natural Resources and Agriculture
From: Julia DeGraw, Oregon Conservation Network
Date: March 2, 2021

RE: Support for HB 2357 – Eliminate OFRI (redirect funding).

Dear Chair Witt, Chair Witt, Vice Chairs Breese-Iverson and Hudson, and members of the House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on **HB 2357**. On behalf of our thousands of members and supporters in Oregon, we would like to register the Oregon Conservation Network's strong support to eliminate the Oregon Forest Resources Institute and redirect its funding to better use.

The Oregon Conservation Network (OCN) is coordinated through the Oregon League of Conservation Voters. OCN is a coalition of 35 not-for-profit organizations throughout the state, united to advocate for pro-conservation legislation and to fight policies that threaten our state's natural legacy. OCN is powered by tens of thousands of Oregonians who belong to their membership organizations, the Oregon Environmental Council being one. We work to promote policies that will ensure a better Oregon for our children – and to fight policies that do not.

[Propublica and Oregonian](#) articles published in 2020 brought to light the myriad ways that this quasi public agency is abusing its power, acting unethically, actively trying to silence sound scientific research, lobbying and electioneering illegally, and inappropriately using public funding on misleading ads to Oregonians about the adequacy of Oregon's forest laws. It is clear that the long running issues with OFRI make the case for eliminating the agency and redirecting its funds to sound climate-smart forest practices, and investing in unbiased, science-based education that helps get kids out into the woods.

Briefly, here are some of the major problems with OFRI:

- **OFRI lobbied illegally** – OFRI is prohibited by statute from lobbying the Oregon State legislature or any other government entity that sets rule and policy. Yet, for decades OFRI has ignored this statutory prohibition. In 2019, they actually set up a table *in the lobby* of the capitol building alongside timber industry lobbying groups like the Oregon Forest Industries Council.
- **OFRI engaged in electioneering against Governor Kate Brown** by participating in election briefings from the dark money group Priority Oregon. This means that state employees who aren't even allowed to lobby, were plotting with secret political donors on how to defeat the sitting Governor in an election.
- Some have claimed that **OFRI is simply the logging industry's commodity commission**, however, they certainly don't behave like one. If you look at the websites of Oregon's 23 commodity commissions, you'll see that they largely offer support for producers to access new markets. OFRI does nothing to market Oregon wood products to customers outside the state. It instead spends most of their budget on misleading the public into thinking Oregon has the



strongest forestry laws in the world – which we do not. ORS 576.066 requires that all commodity commission public communications be reviewed by ODA to ensure they are “factual,” yet OFRI has no such requirement to stick to the truth – and they don’t. You can see this in the impact that logging practices have had on drinking water sources. One need look no further than the surface drinking water source the community of Corbett lost due to irresponsible logging practices made possible by the weakest forest policies on the West Coast.

- Some OFRI defenders suggest that **OFRI’s education programs have value**, but it is important to note that those activities represent a small fraction of OFRI work and resources. Beyond that, it doesn’t make any sense for an entity completely controlled by a single industry to have influence over our K-12 education curriculum. Just as we wouldn’t let the oil and gas industry teach about climate change we should not allow the logging industry to create curriculum regarding Oregon’s forests.

The problems at OFRI are deep and date back almost to its founding. Nothing in its past behavior makes the case that we can trust this agency to change its ways. It is time to eliminate this harmful agency and put its funding to better use for the state of Oregon. **We, the undersigned organizations that comprise the Oregon Conservation Network, urge you to vote yes on HB 2357.**

Sincerely,

Julia DeGraw
Oregon Conservation Network
Oregon League of Conservation Voters Coalition Director

Testimony Submitted On behalf of all the OCN Member Organizations:

1000 Friends of Oregon | Association of Oregon Recyclers | Audubon Society of Portland | Beyond Toxics | Cascadia Wildlands | Center for Biological Diversity | Central Oregon Landwatch | Climate Solutions | Engineers for a Sustainable Future | Defenders of Wildlife | Environment Oregon | Friends of Mount Hood | Friends of the Columbia Gorge | Friends of Mt. Hood | Greater Hells Canyon Council | League of Women Voters of Oregon | Native Fish Society | Neighbors for Clean Air | Oceana | Oregon Coast Alliance | Oregon Environmental Council | Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility | Oregon League of Conservation Voters | Oregon Natural Desert Association | Oregon Land and Water Alliance | Oregon Wild | Renewable Northwest | Rogue Riverkeeper | Trout Unlimited | Tualatin Riverkeepers | Rogue Valley Audubon Society | Sierra Club Oregon Chapter | Surfrider Foundation | Umpqua Valley Audubon Society | WaterWatch of Oregon | Wild Salmon Center