

March 2, 2021

The Honorable Brad Witt
Oregon House of Representatives
State Capitol
Salem, OR 97301

Email: <https://olis.oregonlegislature.gov/liz/2021R1/Testimony/HAGNR>

Subject: OPPOSE HB 2357

OPPOSE HB 2430, 2389, and 2379 - Forest Taxation Bills

NEUTRAL HB 2070

Dear Representative Witt:

Chair Witt, Vice Chairs Breese-Iverson and Hudson, members of the Committee, for the record my name is David Ford. I am a residence of Yamhill County, Oregon, a professional forestry, a small family woodland owner, and a Senior Fellow at the American Forest Foundation.

The American Forest Foundation, based in Washington DC with programs across the U.S., is a non-profit conservation organization that helps protect and measurably increase the clean water, wildlife habitat, sustainable wood supplies, and climate mitigation that come from family-owned forests.

On behalf of the American Forest Foundation, I urge the Committee's opposition to HB 2357. The Oregon Forest Resources Institute provides important and irreplaceable education services to the small family woodland owners across Oregon.

One example of there is the Oregon Forest Protection Laws—an Illustrated Manual which clearly explains how Oregonians are to abide by Oregon's Forest Practices Act and environmental laws. This tool is vital to the success of small forest businesses and woodlands owners who may not have degrees in forest management or policy.

Another example is a recent OFRI publication – Carbon in Oregon's Managed Forests – a science review. This important publication synthesizes the current information on carbon sequestration and storage in Oregon's working forests and in harvested wood products, as well as provides timely information on markets for carbon sequestered and stored in forests and wood products.

Finally, OFRI provides support for many other K-12 forestry education organizations and programs. Educating Oregonians about our vast and important forest natural resource is vital and providing opportunities for school children to visit forests and engage in hands-on learning benefits all Oregonians. These opportunities are made possible through OFRI investments.

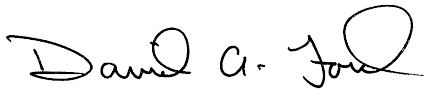
OFRI is just as important to the forest sector as the other 22 agriculture commodity commissions in Oregon. OFRI is special however in that it supports an entire profession. OFRI provides factual and science-based education and information for an entire sector that is both needed and appreciated, especially by small family woodland owners.

Also, American Forest Foundation urges the Committee to oppose HB 2430, 2389, and 2379, and is neutral on HB 2070, concurring with the position of Oregon Small Woodlands Association and its members.

These bills create clear disincentives to grow more valuable older stands when tax liability of harvesting a decades-younger stand will be far more attractive. Small family forestland owners will be disproportionately penalized for keeping trees on the landscape and forcing them to harvest trees at a younger age than nearer their biological rotation age.

We recommend that the Oregon Legislature set up a working group comprised of tax experts, forestland owner representatives and other key stakeholders to evaluate the unique nature of this renewable resource. No other renewable agricultural crop in Oregon is taxed in ways being proposed by these bills. Before a solution is put into proposed legislation, there is every reason to consider the intricacies of continuously planting, growing, managing, and harvesting forests sustainably to produce wood, wildlife, water, recreation, and climate mitigation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David A. Ford". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped "D" and "F".

David Ford
Senior Fellow
American Forest Foundation