

Testimony OFRI - Beverly Law, Emeritus Professor, Oregon State University (Benton Co.)

Chair Witt, Vice Chairs Breese-Iverson and Hudson, and members of the House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources. For the record, my name is Dr. Beverly Law, and I am an Emeritus Professor in Global Change Biology & Terrestrial Systems Science at the College of Forestry, Oregon State University.

I am before you today to testify in support of HB 2357, a bill that would eliminate the Oregon Forest Resources Institute.

I have over 230 refereed publications on carbon cycle science in forests, focusing on the effects of climate, wildfire and management on forest carbon processes, forest carbon accounting, and land-use strategies to mitigate climate change. I served on IPCC expert panels on forest carbon. I am a Clarivate Analytics most highly cited researcher — in the top 1% globally, and a Fellow of the American Geophysical Union.

I was invited to speak about my experience with the Oregon Forest Resources Institute (OFRI). The Oregonian/OPB reported that OFRI has undermined my scientific research and misled Oregonians about the effectiveness of our forest laws in protecting critical resources like *forests as carbon stores*.

We have just a short window to change our land use and management practices to address climate change. Supporting dis- and misinformation interferes with our ability to have educated decision makers and an informed public to help us deal with this serious issue.

In 2003-2007, I co-led a research project on the effects of wildfire on forest recovery, carbon stores and emissions in the wake of the 2002 Biscuit Fire. I learned that staff from OFRI had contacted the leadership at the College of Forestry to challenge our team's work and joined with other industry representatives to try to get the funding for our research pulled. Ultimately, their efforts were not successful, and the paper was published in the gold standard of scientific publications — Science Magazine. Their meddling in scientific research goes against academic freedom.

More recently, our research team did a study on land use strategies to mitigate climate change. It was published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences in 2018. Excerpts from emails that appeared in the Oregonian/OPB article showed the level of involvement of OFRI in downplaying our study results that run counter to their narrative. The tactics were similar — call the research flawed, attack the integrity of scientists, and distort the results to suit their agenda.

For several years, I served on the Oregon Global Warming Commission and contributed to the 2017 Biennial Report to the Legislature. Our research results in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences were cited throughout the 2018 OGWC Forest Carbon Accounting Project Report. OFRI wrote their own Carbon Special Report in 2020. Today, I am submitting a comparison of OFRI's claims on forest carbon and climate and the OGWC report. This comparison shows an entity that does not adhere to standards of scientific credibility.

Our state needs the best available science about forests, water, wildlife and climate change. Our teachers and our kids need support for science-based teacher training and outdoor education. There are other entities that can do this in an appropriate way. In my opinion, the public is better off being informed by sources that rely on the best available science. OFRI has demonstrated repeatedly that they are not up to the task.