



Associated Oregon Loggers, Inc.

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March 17, 2021

The Honorable Jeff Golden, Chair
Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Wildfire Recovery
Oregon State Capitol
Salem, OR 97301

Subject: SB 335-3 **OPPOSE**

Chair Golden, Vice Chair Heard and Committee Members:

Introduction

For the record, my name is Amanda Astor. I am here on behalf of the Associated Oregon Loggers (AOL) as their forest policy manager. AOL is the statewide trade association who has been the voice of small family forest businesses for over 50 years.

Thank you for the opportunity to share with you the voice of nearly 1,000 small family forest businesses who **oppose SB 335 and its -3 amendment**.

AOL's members work daily to steward Oregon's forests, following all of the pertinent environmental laws. These honorable small businesses led by forestry professionals employ more than 22,000 Oregonians who provide sustainable forest management services for Oregon's public and private forestlands, while producing economic stability for their communities and living wage jobs for their employees and families.

Through pride and integrity, independent family businesses deliver quality forestry support services including hazard reduction, fire protection, forest restoration, reforestation, road construction, recreation access, material transportation, harvest operations, silviculture services, consultation, and other forest management activities. AOL's members are a critical link in the forest product supply chain. The forest contracting workforce is comprised of over 17,000 employees in forestry contracting and transportation plus, an additional 4,500 employees that provide support for contractors, are immigrant workers or are self-employed owner operators.

These independent small businesses employ forestry professionals that include Certified Foresters and Oregon Professional Loggers. These natural resource experts are all opposed to tax increases and natural resource education program changes proposed by the bills in front of the Committee.

Board Composition

Knowledgeable practitioners are needed on the Board of Forestry (Board) to make critical decisions effecting tens of thousands of Oregonians. By reducing these individuals from 3 to 2 persons, balance and equity cannot be achieved. Representation of these informed individuals on the Board is not to create bias or watered-down policies, but rather to ensure solutions are based on real outcomes that recognize how they would affect work on the ground. Without these informed perspectives, it is easy to see how decisions could have unjust and unduly consequences on an entire marketplace in Oregon that employs more than 60,000 Oregonians.

AOL's members make up a large percentage of these employees and being heavily regulated ourselves, we see the direct impacts that decisions made by the Board have on the ground.

Many boards and commissions in Oregon have representation from the industry being regulated and often comprise large majorities. As it currently sits, 3 members from the forestry sector does not constitute a majority on the 7-member Board. What these three members do constitute is an equitable, informed and balanced discussion.

Thus, AOL believes maintenance of the current Board of Forestry composition requirements should be maintained if not improved by including additional members of the forest sector. Perhaps, to add balance, a member of the different sectors within the marketplace could make up the Board instead. There could be a member from the forest contracting sector, the manufacturing sector, the large landowner voice, the small woodland voice or other such voices within the diverse wood marketplace.

Regional Forest Practice Committees

Different regions in Oregon have vastly different ecological and economic concerns. The Regional Forest Practice Committees (RFPCs) exist in order to address these differing concerns in a forum free from discrimination. This forum allows for open and honest dialogue that leads to solutions. The discussions and solutions that develop out of the RFPCs are also only suggestions in that these committees are merely advisory in nature. There is no law that requires the Board to approve the conclusions of the RFPCs.

Similar to the arguments above about the composition of the Board, it is critical to have knowledgeable practitioners on the RFPCs as well. This on-the-ground experience allows intelligent conversations to lead to workable solutions. Without these committees, it is unclear what process would be used to address these technical issues and whether or not the solutions would be operationally and economically feasible.

Overall, AOL believes eliminating the RFPCs, or even limiting the number of regulated members on them, would lead to ill-informed fixes to technical issues relating to forest practices and could result in the loss of small family forest businesses in the forest sector.

Changes to State Forester Hiring Process

Generally, AOL does not support the move to turn the State Forester position into a political figure head. We are concerned that this appointment would contradict the already governor appointed and senate approved Board creating a muddled role of Board Members. The decisions of the Board would be less critical and the process of equity and proper representation would be removed.

To sum it up, we believe the current process is the most equitable one and should be maintained.

Conclusion

SB 335 and the -3 amendment would hurt AOL's nearly 1,000 small family forest business by way of limiting their representation in all three aspects changed in the bill. Their voices would be squandered. This bill tells our members that those with no experience doing their jobs, who have never walked a day in their shoes (or caulks, pronounced "corks") and who likely lack the technical expertise to improve their jobs actually know more.

We simply cannot accept this rhetoric and attempt to strip knowledgeable practitioners out of the decision-making process for our entire marketplace.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on our views in **opposition to SB 335 and the -3 amendment**.

Graciously,



Amanda Astor (she/her/hers)
Forest Policy Manager