



March 24, 2021

RE: Support for SB 544

Chair Golden, Vice-Chair Heard, and members of the committee, for the record my name is Seth Barnes, and I am a professional forester with the Oregon Forest & Industry Council (OFIC). OFIC is a statewide trade association representing forestland owners and forest products manufacturers. OFIC's core mission is to advocate on behalf of its members to maintain a positive, stable business operating environment for Oregon's forest products sector that fosters long-term investments in healthy forests; to ensure a reliable timber supply from Oregon's public and private forestlands; and to promote stewardship and sustainable management of forestlands that protect environmental values and maintain productive uses on all forestlands.

I'm here to offer support for the concepts envisioned under SB 544. As we understand it, this bill is about highlighting the need to promptly set our state forests on a trajectory to full recovery following catastrophic wildfire. The devastation of this summer's wildfires, including human losses and property, is heartbreaking and tragic. Landowners now face the challenge of recovery restoration of what was lost. As a member of that community, OFIC stands in united support of active restoration and recovery efforts across all forest lands. Active management is vitally important to help stabilize soils and stream banks, promote clean water, foster active carbon sequestration, and restore vital fish and wildlife habitat for generations to come. Furthermore, the timely harvest of standing dead trees followed promptly by reforestation maximizes the value of our forest resource to create wood products needed to rebuild communities, reduce the risk of future wildfires, and create a safer and more vibrant forest for the protection and benefit of all Oregonians.

OFIC urges the State to commit the resources necessary to conduct these vital post-fire harvest and reforestation efforts. We are concerned with the Department of Forestry's recent decision to only harvest and reforest on a small fraction of the State Lands inside the footprint of the Beachie Creek Fire. The recent Implementation Plan (IP) lists approximately 9,000 acres of State-owned land in merchantable age classes that were either moderately or severely impacted by the wildfire, yet only approximately 3,000 of those acres are scheduled for recovery harvest in FY 2021. The goal of these efforts should be prompt and effective recovery. Economic value can help offset the cost of recovery and ensure recoverable fiber is stored in long-lived wood products. ODF should manage our public forests in a way that will accelerate recovery, including harvest, slashing, erosion control, and reforestation. Recent polling shows [strong public support](#) for these recovery efforts on public lands. While ODF has some limited plans for recovery harvests in 2022 and 2023, waiting to start this work for areas of lower value only ensures that their value further drops precipitously, making the recovery of those acres even more costly for the state, and likely ensuring more acres ultimately are left untreated, unmanaged, left to

slowly recover on their own- a process that can take centuries instead of decades or even just a few years under proper care.

The State's current plan also refers to leaving over 100-miles of burned riparian forests completely unmanaged. Standing dead trees offer very little benefit to riparian function. Leaving these stretches of burned riparian forest untreated in the short run will result in increased sediment yields, and long term will surely result in large swaths of thick brush and scattered hardwoods along the streams. While brush and hardwoods offer some value to riparian function, a healthy aquatic ecosystem in the Cascades of Oregon includes a significant proportion of mature conifer trees – which will be unlikely without a concerted recovery effort. OFIC highly recommends recovery efforts adjacent to these streams to provide short and long-term ecologic value. A targeted strategy to recover these important riparian areas will pay dividends for generations to come.

In the Pacific Northwest there are several examples of similar restoration efforts from previous generations that benefit society in spades today. When Mount St Helens erupted in May of 1980 it left a devastated forest ecosystem in its wake. Two management paradigms emerged from that event; natural recovery and accelerated recovery through management. Forty years later the contrast could not be more stark; green lush forest on private and State ownership comes to an abrupt end at the border with National Volcanic Monument Land. see photo below.

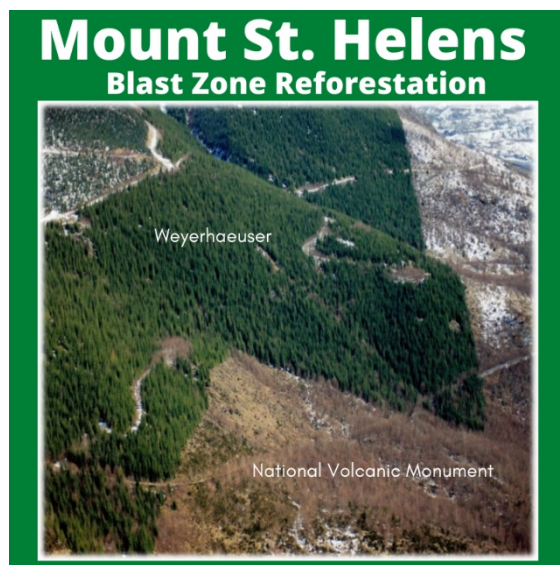


Photo Illustration Credit Oregon Women in

Another example solidly etched in the psyche of every Oregonian is the story of the Tillamook burn. Following a series of fires and re-burns that came to be known as the Tillamook Burn, State and local foresters teamed up with community members from across the region in a massive reforestation effort, the largest of its kind at the time. Much was tried and learned in that herculean effort, and approximately 70-years later all Oregonians benefit from that hard work and dedication of those pioneers. See photos below courtesy of Tillamookforestcenter.org



Both familiar examples offer tangible evidence of the long-lasting and real value that comes from sound principles of stewardship through targeted and focused harvest and reforestation recovery efforts. These efforts were both highly effective despite their lack of modern technology and an incomplete knowledge regarding reforestation. We're in a much better position now to effectively apply all the science, tools, resources, and technical information available to us today. Oregonians expect the State to do the right thing and follow in the footsteps of these early forestry pioneers to effectively recover these vital forest resources. With these sentiments in mind, OFIC urges the State to manage all the forests in the State's care towards effective and efficient recovery for the benefit of all Oregonians. This is truly one of the most meaningful moments in our careers as foresters, and this recovery effort, if done well, will leave a lasting legacy for generations to come.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments.

Sincerely,

Seth A Barnes
Director of Forest Policy
Oregon Forest & Industries Council