

To Committee Chair Nathanson, Vice Chairs Pham and Reschke, and members of the Committee on Revenue:

My name is Theresa Hausser and I live in east Lane County. I offer this in opposition to HB 2379.

This bill seeks to defund OFRI. OFRI is a remarkable resource to woodland owners, and indeed, to anyone who loves the forest and wants to know it better. OFRI is the object of much legislative ire seemingly because of a ProPublica, Oregonian, and OPB joint article littered with misinformation and clearly polemical—although just what it is polemicizing against is unclear (other than OFRI's existence).

My wife and I are still pretty new to owning our (now fire-ravaged) woodland, and much of the competence we are developing in caring for our woodland has roots in OFRI resources: OFRI publications, OFRI educational materials, OFRI educational partnerships. I came into woodland ownership determined that nobody could make me cut my trees. My experience of OFRI is that however much I might have wanted someone to tell me what to do with my woodland (other than cut some of my trees), nobody in the science-based woodland community did that—including any of OFRI's resources. A harvest or thin might be beneficial to the health of my woodland; they might further my management objectives; they might give a logging crew some work. OFRI would not tell me to do this or not do this; rather, OFRI's materials (and educational partnerships) would help me understand what I was seeing in my woodland and how I might support the health of my woodland, the health of the watershed, the health of the ecosystem, and how I might achieve my goals for my woodland.

HB 2379 dramatically increases taxes on woodland owners at harvest time. It also makes woodland owners wholly responsible for the state's wildfire efforts. So eliminating a woodland owner resource that our harvest taxes fund to set up a fund that benefits all Oregonians (for our forests are, indeed, a state treasure), in the wake of wildfires not caused by us that burned many of our properties, seems cruel—or, more accurately, polemical. But like the fore mentioned ProPublica piece, the object of the polemic is unclear.

Let's allow the OFRI audit to take place before eliminating (sorry, defunding) a resource vital to understanding and caring for our forests and providing for their healthy futures. Let's leave existing statutes in place and leave all Oregonians responsible for wildfire costs. (Or perhaps the public that doesn't pay wildfire costs shouldn't be allowed in the wilds?) And let's not dramatically increase taxes on woodland owners still recovering from ice storms, Snowmageddon, and the Labor Day fires.

Thank you for your consideration.

Theresa Hausser
Vida, OR
Oregon Small Woodlands Association member