



May 10, 2021

My name is Roger Beyer, and I am the lobbyist for Oregon Small Woodlands Association (OSWA). OSWA opposes HB 2357.

OFRI was set up legislatively in 1991 with guidelines to educate the public and forest owners about forest practices. Funding for OFRI comes directly from forest owners who harvest timber through the Forest Products Harvest tax. OFRI is a Commodity Commission for forest owners paid for by forest owners.

The educational work performed by OFRI has been extremely valuable to the Oregon public in understanding forestry and the wood products industry, one of Oregon's key industries, particularly in rural Oregon.

For Oregon's 79,000 family forest owners who manage 1/3 of Oregon's private forests, OFRI has positively influenced the management of Oregon's family forest owners who do not have a staff of professional foresters. This bill would eliminate 67% of the funding for OFRI and charges ODF to build programs to replace those functions. Currently OFRI provides science based and reviewed publications on every phase of forestry from growing and harvesting trees to all the public values found in Oregon's forests.

This bill would change how OFRI is allowed to interact with and educate forestland owners. The agency that regulates the forest practices act should not be the same agency building educational programs about it. OSWA cannot support this change.

Oregon's land use laws mandate lands zoned as forestland must be maintained as forests with some minor options to convert to agricultural use. By statute, the purpose of Oregon's private forests is to grow and harvest trees. Just like the purpose of land zoned for agriculture needs to grow an agricultural crop. The need for a Commodity Commission for forest land is no different than the need for any other agricultural crop.

It is clear, OFRI is a Commodity Commission for Oregon's private forest owners and such, OFRI is no different than any other Commodity Commission, except that it is housed under the Department of Forestry. Like all other Commodity Commissions, the voting members on OFRI's board are producers who pay the assessment along with one member to represent the public. Adding two new voting members to the board who

have no interest in the forest products industry being successful concerns us greatly. All the meetings are open to the public and the public has an opportunity to make comments when the board meets. What value to the timber industry will these new board members bring?

The changes to the OFRI board under this bill would jeopardize OFRI as a Commodity Commission. These Commissions in Oregon are for producers, governed by producers and paid for by producers. One of their primary assertions is that OFRI is funded by taxpayer dollars. In fact, OFRI is funded through the Forest Products Harvest Tax for the purpose stated in statute paid only by forest owners who harvest timber. Forest owners can opt out of this tax, if they wish, but only a few have done so.

Additionally, the Secretary of State's office is currently conducting a performance review of OFRI, which is expected no later than this summer. There is no emergency to change OFRI. It is premature to even be having these discussions until the audit is completed.

It is OSWA opinion that OFRI has performed exactly how it was set up to do by providing forestry education to the public and to forest owners, as a Commodity Commission operating in a manner consistent with its statutory requirements.

OSWA requests the House Committee on Revenue not move this bill forward.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.