

Chair Witt, Committee Members, and bill sponsors,

This is wrong to impose new taxes on family woodland owners. I oppose HB 2379 and HB 2598 that impose severance taxes on timber harvested from Oregon family forest lands. Linda and I have cared for our small woodlands and are faithful to tending the land for future harvest and beyond.

Severance taxes are for “severed” non-renewable resources, like coal and natural gas that are sold out of state not renewable natural resources like timber. State law requires timber be replanted on average four trees are planted for every one that is harvested.

Keeping forests as forests is in the best interest of all Oregonians. Reinstating a severance tax encourages conversion of forestland to other uses (residential and industrial) that do not provide environmental benefits like carbon capture and storage, wildlife habitat, clean water, and recreation.

Since 1907, Oregon has maintained 94% of its forestland area, whereas Washington and California have lost over 15% of their forestland to development.

For tax purposes, forest landowners are treated like all other landowners in Oregon. Forestland is taxed at its real market value: as land primarily used to grow and harvest timber.

Just like hazelnuts, when trees are harvested, processed, and sold, income is generated and taxed. Up-front costs (planting, thinning, pest and fire prevention) aren't recouped for 40 years or more, provided trees aren't destroyed by Mother Nature before then.

Focus should remain on restoring hundreds of thousands of acres of scorched forests, not taxing the very people working to rehabilitate our forests for all Oregonians.

Thank you for opposing HB 2379

Mike Hanratty
Tillamook, Oregon