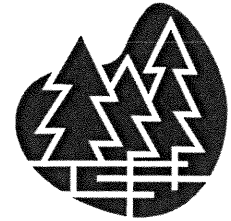


New Meadows Tree Farm

Rex Storm • Cornelius, OR 97113 • Washington County



February 24, 2021

The Honorable Brad Witt
Oregon House of Representatives
State Capitol
Salem, OR 97301

Email: <https://olis.oregonlegislature.gov/liz/2021R1/Testimony/HAGNR>

Subject: OPPOSE HB 2357 – OFRI Elimination Bill

Dear Representative Witt:

Chair Witt, Vice Chairs Breese-Iverson and Hudson, members of the Committee, for the record my name is Rex Storm, from Cornelius, Washington County, Oregon.

I urge the Committee's opposition to HB 2357. As a member of the family forest community, I concur with the position of Oregon Small Woodlands Association to oppose this bill.

My wife and I own and manage 95 acres of forestland, mostly located in Columbia County—within your District 31, Representative Witt. The proposed bill to eliminate Oregon Forest Resource Institute (OFRI) would have a negative impact on our family's small business forest operation. I disagree with the false narratives from media and the activist attacks, both of which attempt to unfairly destroy the well-functioning OFRI programs that support the role of Oregon sound forest management, and encourage sound family forest landowner stewardship.

OFRI programs help to educate my neighbors about good forestry; it improves those people I hire to work my forest; and, its programs lend greater credibility to the important contributions of my family's investment and sweat equity into forest stewardship. OFRI is an integral branch of my forest community—and as such I advocate that OFRI expand its educational reach—as opposed to this bill's misguided proposal to eliminate this valuable partner of my family forest.

Why would someone advocate that such an effective organization—as is OFRI—be eliminated from “The Oregon Way”? Elimination is wrong; OFRI should remain in our forest community. Oregon is a better place when Oregonians are informed about the diverse fabric of our state's less-visible rural natural resource communities. OFRI programs also inform Oregonians about the importance of sustainable forestry values within their state. School children are more informed about Oregon forests; urban dwellers are reassured that forests are important to Oregonians; and career seekers are exposed to occupational opportunities in forests and forest products. All of these good things happen because of OFRI's effective educational programs.

This bill's proposed gerrymandering is wrong and unfair—because it would eliminate effective OFRI education programs that inform family forest landowners and small business forest contractors about forest management best practices and diverse ecosystem values.

Thank you, Representative Witt, for your understanding of forestry. I urge your opposition to eliminate OFRI. This bill would wrongly disrupt Oregon family forests and our forest future.

Respectfully,

Rex D. Storm

Rex Storm, Certified Forester, Owner, New Meadows Growth LLC