

February 25, 2021

Testimony of Scott Russell

Chair Witt, Vice Chairs Breeze-Iverson and Hudson, members of the Committee.

My name is Scott Russell from Columbia County.

First, I would like to provide a short background about our tree farm. My wife and I started in 1974 acquiring land with trees on it. Over the years we have been able to assemble several hundred acres around this piece with financial help from our two sons. One 80-acre piece was platted with over 260 lots which we were able to put back into forest land designation. We have been congratulated by the community for restoring the land to grow trees. Growing trees has benefited the streams which flow through, enhanced the air quality, provided wildlife habitat, and timber products which support local jobs and income for the community. It takes us 60 years to grow a tree to our plan. The tax structure which is under attack makes it impossible to plan successfully. We now are engaging the third generation to our farm but when all three generations look at the real possibility of being taxed off the land, we have to wonder if it is worth it.

A human started fire in 2019 destroyed 15,000 acres and we had land in the middle of it. We spent over \$60,000 to reforest the land. We applied for government assistance over a year ago and have not seen any help. Increasing our tax burden is not the answer to keeping our forests in Oregon.

I am in favor of HB 2070 but very much opposed to HBs 2389, 2430, 2357, 2379, 2398. Our land is in the Small-Tract Option. We have planned accordingly. Please do not pass bills which would eliminate the Oregon Forest Resources Institute. OFRI provides enormous educational and technical information to forest landowners and the public as well. Now is a time when more education is needed to make our forests and forest dwellings safer from wildfire. OFRI is our commodity commission just like the many other agricultural growers. It is funded by our current timber taxes, not the general Oregon population.

In short, If it ain't broke, don't try to fix it.

Thank you for the opportunity to talk to you.

Scott Russell

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