

My husband, Mark, and I are small landowners on Upper Berlin Drive between Lebanon and Sweet Home. We have seen the shift in timber management in Oregon over the decades. It is past time to reinstate a severance tax and return the majority of the proceeds to the counties. It is a myth that timber counties suffered economic decline because of environmental regulation. Tax cuts often had greater impact. What's worse is the tax cuts are benefiting a small number of large companies and Wall Street investors, not Oregonians. Timber is managed in short cycle plantations which have little value other than the quick buck. I grew up in Oregon and have seen the decimation of large tree forests. So much is lost when the forest loses diversity. Water quality is a big concern. Where we live, in the Hamilton Creek drainage, there are numerous cuts planned in the watershed, many in areas of high erosion and landslide hazard. Spring is coming and we're seeing the big equipment heading up the road. Soon we'll see the daily string of log trucks heading back out, until next winter. The least that can be done is 1) empower the DEQ to enforce environmental protection and 2) return some of the timber money to the local counties for watershed and wildlife habitat improvement.