

Chair Witt, committee members, and staff,

My name is Tristan Huff and my family lives on and manages about 200 acres of land in Coos County. While producing supplemental income for our family is an important reason for owning land, we also feel a strong responsibility to protect the natural resources all Oregonians depend on including clean water, clean air, healthy wildlife, recreational opportunities, and so many more. Along with the rest of Oregon's family-owned, working forests, we are uniquely situated to provide these public goods while still producing timber for our economy.

I am also a citizen of Coos County with three grade-school aged children and recognize the need for increased and more stable local tax revenue. I support fair assessments on the real value of our property and a local tax rate that is able to support the needs of the county. I also support the currently imposed privilege tax on the harvest of timber that is used to help us, and all forest landowners, manage responsibly. I am, however, opposed to additional severance taxes unique to the harvest of timber. My family already pays federal and state income tax on revenue from timber harvest just like any other producer of renewable natural resources does. If the State or counties need additional revenue, more equitable avenues should be pursued.

Besides considering the equitability of additional severance taxes on timber harvest, I would ask the committee to consider the land-use implications of such an action. While my family owns land for many reasons and we fully intend to keep our land in the family for generations to come, there is an ever present tension between ownership and selling out. The ability of the land to produce supplemental income is critically important in any decisions around retaining ownership and an increase in operating costs will make the case for selling that much stronger. The way I see it, family owned forestland that is sold can end up one of two ways once it leaves a family. First, it could be sold to larger industrial or investment owners (often out-of-state owners) that will manage primarily for maximizing return on investment with less emphasis on providing public goods. Second, it could be converted to smaller rural-residential type land use with higher population density (similar to what we see in Washington and California) and decreased production of public and private goods. Both of these results would be, in my opinion, contrary to the core values of Oregonians. I'm reminded that Oregon has always done things differently and I believe the unique taxation system for timberland we have has served us well and resulted in a state that we can be proud of.

I thank the committee for considering my perspective and am happy to clarify my positions or answer any questions you might have.

Sincerely,

Tristan Huff