

Only a few short years ago Oregon was known for its wonderful wood products and timber industry. Thanks to those who have (and continue to) lobbied for and promoted questionable, at best, "environmental concerns" this great industry has been all but destroyed. Old stands of unharvested, unmanaged timber have become fire hazards across the state.

Now, as vast timber resources lay waste throughout Oregon, only a very small fraction of Oregon's potential renewable production is currently marketed. As a result, retail lumber has skyrocketed in price and housing has become almost prohibitive for young Oregonians to build a home.

If they can afford it, the small timber owners who are allowed to operate with minimum restrictions and unfettered capitalistic incentives, manage their forest plots and provide lumber to our economy in the best manner for all concerned. Any tax that is levied on small, private landowners tends to discourage their incentive to produce, eliminate them from the industry, and reduce overall market efficiency. Please do not tax these struggling timberholders.

If Oregon needs more timber-related revenue, may I respectfully offer the following suggestions: Tax the big timber holders in Oregon. Tax the big corporations who have traditionally run roughshod over the small timber owners. Lease, sell, or tax timber holdings that Oregon owns. If our state is in the business of owning timber, it's high time we make it economically productive. If we can not afford to manage our valuable timberland in a manner to derive an annual net income, but instead choose to tax the little guy for purportedly needed revenue, Oregon needs to turn the forestlands over to someone who is capable of getting the job done efficiently--namely the small timber operator.

And, even more importantly, as we all know the federal government claims over half the land in Oregon, a vast portion of which is timberland. Not only is the federal government a very poor steward of the timber resources, they increasingly deprive Oregonians of rightful access to public lands, and moreover, the feds harbor very dangerous fire hazards on most timberlands throughout Oregon.

As legislators, you have surely read the enabling legislation which was passed in both Oregon and Washington D. C. at the time Oregon became a state. You therefore know that as of 1859, the federal government promised an intent to divest themselves from federally-owned land in Oregon. As you know, there is a very strong constitutional position you can take to make this happen. The federal government is not authorized to own vast portions of the West (Art. I, Sec. 8, Clause 17, U. S Constitution). You have the power to do it right without taxing the small timber owner.

Please either tax the federal government, or act to take over those federal lands for the people of Oregon, preferably the latter. That would be the right thing to do. If you want to do what's right, and you need support for this action, please contact me. I will find you thousands of petitioners who would support your efforts. You would become the heroes, forever, of Oregon--and the idols of other state legislators across the West, who yearn to follow suite.

Will you move to take over Oregon's federally-controlled public lands? Or is it just too much trouble, and politically incorrect for politicians who have goals that conflict with the best interests of the private enterprise producers of Oregon, to do the right thing?