

Chair Witt and Committee Members

As a small private forestland owner in Oregon, Linda and I greatly rely on the educational programs and publications that are produced by the Oregon Forest Resources Institute (OFRI). I oppose HB 2379 and HB 2357 that eliminate OFRI.

The Legislature created OFRI in 1991 to educate the public and landowners about forest practices.

The forest products industry is:

- one of the largest industries in the state
- the economic backbone of many rural communities
- the nation's number one supplier of dimensional lumber and plywood,
- a source of more than 60,000 family wage jobs
- a major supporter of secondary businesses.

OFRI's programs are science-based and developed for all Oregonians, young and old, rural and urban, rich and poor. The K-12 programs that they produce are teaching our youth about forestry and natural resources. These programs instill a love of wildlife and forest management that will help the next generation of Oregonians conserve and protect forest lands into the future.

The publications that OFRI produces with their educational partners are critical to providing all forest landowners with the information to make sound forest management choices on our land. These programs have helped Linda and I manage our forest properly and provide the much needed wildlife habitat and long term growth and harvest of our trees.

OFRI is funded exclusively through the Forest Products Harvest Tax, a tax on harvested timber paid only by timber growers and receives NO General Fund dollars.

OFRI is the state's commodity commission for timber. There are 22 other commodity commissions for agriculture crops such as wheat, beef, blueberries, hazelnuts and others. Yet unlike the other commodity commissions, OFRI cannot lobby or directly levy assessments to industry, and requires a legislative appointee.

We are asking you to reject House Bills 2379 and 2537 and to maintain the current harvest tax structure.

Thank you for your time,
Mike Hanratty
Tillamook, Oregon