



The League of Women Voters of Oregon is a 102-year-old grassroots nonpartisan political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government. We envision informed Oregonians participating in a fully accessible, responsive, and transparent government to achieve the common good. LWVOR Legislative Action is based on advocacy positions formed through studies and member consensus. The League never supports or opposes any candidate or political party.

February 3, 2022

To: [Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Wildfire Recovery](#)
[Sen. Jeff Golden, Chair](#)
Members of the Committee

Re: **SB 1546-1 (amendments)–Elliott State Research Forest Authority Creation – SUPPORT**

The League of Women Voters of Oregon believes that natural resources such as forests, and the animals and plants living within them, should be managed as interrelated parts of life-supporting ecosystems. We have positions in support of Parks and Water Quality as well as new positions on Forestry that apply to this issue. Additionally, we support a stable state system for financing public schools. **Our members have been actively involved in assuring that this very special Oregon treasure, the Elliott State Forest, is maintained in public hands.**

In 2015, we said: The best transition scenario, and the best management strategy, decouples old-growth clearcutting from school funding, protects the Elliott’s remaining native forests, wild salmon and imperiled wildlife, safeguards the Elliott drinking water, public recreational and educational opportunities, and promotes timber jobs by restoratively thinning the second-growth tree farms.

We supported the \$100 million in bonding to help “buy” assets not otherwise protected by the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and any Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP). We support continuation of the HCP—an HCP that can be upheld in court and that protects Oregon’s iconic salmon, northern spotted owl, marbled murrelet and others as they are recognized as attempting to survive—even thrive--in this forest.

In December of 2019, we expressed appreciation for the work of the Advisory Committee and the Draft Set of Principles developed by the Committee. Those Principles are now included in this legislation as foundational to the formation of this new proposed public Authority.

In December of 2020, we shared with the State Land Board our opinion that the final issues to be resolved were Governance and Finance. We have followed the work of the Elliott State Research Forest (ESRF) Advisory Committee as they worked with Oregon State University (OSU) and the Dept. of State Lands (DSL) since the December 2020 decision of the State Land Board. **SB 1546-1** as filed by the DSL appointed Advisory Committee, DSL, and OSU reflect the public interest and the university’s interest by the creation of this Authority with continued oversight by the publicly elected members of the State Land Board. The governance structure creates a new public Authority with clear sideboards around activities in the Forest commensurate with not only the State Land Board’s adoption of the OSU Research Proposal as amended in April of 2021, but also the HCP and a Forest Management Plan (FMP) to be approved by the State Land Board and adopted by the new Authority.

As for Finance, the forest, as an asset of the Common School Fund (CSF), needed to harvest enough to add to that Fund and not be a drag on it. Because the forest is home to iconic species and is an important source of nearby communities’ drinking water, harvest was a challenge. OSU and the yet to be adopted FMP and HCP will clearly guide any harvest. However, that harvest must cover the costs of managing the Forest. We support that a new appraisal is being done on the Forest and that a contract will be let to assure that the OSU/FMP/HCP proposal will cover that management and proposed research without an over

harvest that the League would not support. Among the assurances is that OSU has promised to move toward allowing the forest to increase older forest stands over time. With their current research forests, the Legislature has not provided enough funds for OSU to continue their award-winning College of Forestry without the pressure to overharvest places like the McDonald Forest. **Decoupling the funding for the College of Forestry from ESRF harvest is critical.** We believe that is clear in the legislation.

We understand that **SB1546-1** is coupled with a request for the legislature to pay the Common School Fund for the Forest, currently assumed to be \$120.8 million. We support the decoupling although had hoped that the money could come from federal dollars. But, if it takes General Funds to complete this deal, it's worth it! Like the Private Forest Accord that was recently signed, the work of the various interests involved in the current ESRF Advisory Committee that have come to agree on this legislation, is something we need to embrace—and we hope the legislature does also.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input into your decision. We ask that you approve and forward this legislation with the -1 amendments submitted by the State Land Board to the Joint Committee on Ways and Means to complete the decoupling of the forest from the Common School Fund.



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Cc: The Honorable Kate Brown, Governor (gina.zejdlik@oregon.gov)
The Honorable Tobias Read, Treasurer (oregon.treasurer@ost.state.or.us)
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