



MELISSA CRIBBINS, COMMISSIONER

Coos County Board of Commissioners
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January 31, 2022

Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Wildfire Recovery

Senator Jeff Golden, Chair

Senator Bill Kennemer, Vice Chair

Senator Floyd Prozanski

Senator Dallas Heard

Senator Deb Patterson

900 Court St. NE

Salem, Oregon 97301

Re: Support for SB1546 -1 Elliott State Research Forest

Dear Chair Golden and Members of the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Wildfire Recovery:

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony in support of SB 1546. I have been a member of the Elliott State Research Forest Advisory Committee since its inception. It has been a time consuming process, but it is also very rewarding when a collaborative process works and you actually see the results of people listening to each other. We always call it the Oregon way, but I feel like it has been missing lately. This process gives me hope that it isn't gone altogether.

SB 1546, which is before you today, is the product of three years of hard fought compromise and collaboration. The advisory committee includes representatives of timber interests and those of conservation groups; tribes and schools; hunters, anglers, outdoor enthusiasts, and researchers. We all listened to one another, learned to trust one another, found collaborative solutions to tough questions and stayed at the table for three years. This collaboration is shown in the legislation here today.

The Elliott is part of the economic backbone of Coos County. We are blessed with an abundance of natural resources, and natural resource management is part of our DNA. What that looks like has evolved over time, and I see this as the next step in the future of this forest.

Coos and Douglas Counties lost nearly 100 family wage jobs when Shutter Creek Correctional Facility was shut down last year. The creation of a research forest, along with the faculty and students that will accompany this facility, will be an important economic development opportunity for our region. We look forward to continuing to work with Oregon State University as this process moves forward. We are hopeful that this new research forest will put an end to the decades of fighting and litigation that have enveloped the Elliott, and will usher in a new future of collaborative research and management that we need to move forward. Active forest management and protection of habitat should not be mutually exclusive. The ESRF is an opportunity to prove that.

We believe that economic diversification is critical to the success of Coos County, and we believe that this is a critical part of that strategy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Melissa T. Cribbins', written in black ink.

Melissa T. Cribbins
Coos County Commissioner