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On Behalf Of: Gretchen Valido

Committee: Senate Committee On Natural Resources and Wildfire Recovery

Measure: SB1534

I submit this testimony in opposition to OR SB 1546 - Relating to Elliott State Research Forest as presently written.

The Coast Range's Elliott State Forest (ESF) is a treasured asset belonging to all Oregonians, and its history dates back to generations of indigenous peoples who hunted, fished, traded, tended and protected its abundant resources, practicing ecological forestry principles to ensure the forest's ongoing vitality and viability.

The Climate Crisis has brought worldwide attention to the urgency and benefits of drawing down and storing carbon in natural carbon sinks, like our forests. Pacific Northwest forests store more carbon per acre than tropical rainforests—making them vital for Climate mitigation. It is estimated that the Elliott State Forest stores a whopping 10 million tons of carbon.

Creating the ERF gives Oregon an opportunity to shift forest management practices to a model of Climate-Carbon-centric management, with highest purposes to sequester carbon in older trees, while providing for younger stands to grow older and layer on carbon. As fossil fuels are worth more left in the ground, so are older growth trees. In an expanding carbon credit marketplace, ESF carbon reserves can generate considerable revenue to comfortably accommodate personnel, management, research, education, wildlife protection, etc. costs while saving old trees from logging, a win-win. The purpose of the ESF plan should not be to prioritize providing timber for mills, an inadequate and hardly forward-looking plan. The plan should emphasize mitigating effects of ever-rising atmospheric CO2e along with modeling and learning from implementation of ecological forestry practices.

What's to like in SB 1546?
a) Stands of old growth, trees over 152 years old, will be protected.
b) Permanent reserves will protect 90 percent of trees 65 years and older.
c) Permanent reserves will protect 54,154 acres of the forest.
d) 30,000 contiguous acres, about 40 percent of the forest, will be permanently reserved.
e) Strengthened riparian protections.

What's not to like?

a)   OSU research proposal relies on perpetual logging to pay for core research and management activities. Broader forest ecoservices are poorly addressed. Focus

of the research to include restoration, resilience, education, surface/groundwater protection/regeneration, recreation, biodiversity, carbon sequestration, and ecological forest management modeling. Consider a program incorporating a unique forest-ecological-climate-centered student education program to prepare future leaders for a changing world. It should instill a culture of minimizing carbon footprint.

b)   OSU's plan slices the forest like pizza. Harvesting will continue on 14,654 acres, in marbled murrelet, 65-160 year old stand habitat, on clearcuts of 14,000 acres. It will affect 60% of the forest with thinning and cutting of the watershed. All unacceptable. Where is a holistic perspective?

c)   The plan grants governance to OSU's working forest plan, will prevent consideration of other innovative and forward-looking research ideas—a damning defect. Where do central existential issues come into account: carbon storage, Climate mitigation? Can it be more nimble?

d)   In severing ESF from Common School Fund, it jeopardizes future revenue from carbon markets.

e)   Ecological forestry experts are sidelined and absent from the DSL Advisory Committee; timber had much input.

f)   Unlike OGWC, SB 1546 doesn't look to guidance from the IPCCC and best science resources.

g)   It doesn't acknowledge OGWC's goals to address urgency of Climate action; adding to state emissions reduction goals; being informed by science; advancing equity; creating accountability; improving with new information.

Don't lock this legislation without options for change. Allow for future innovation. Consider Oregonians' Carbon and Climate rights opportuned within ESF's future direction.