

February 6, 2023

House Committee On Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water

RE: Opposition of HB 3019

Chair Representative Ken Helm, Vice-Chairs Representatives Annessa Hartman and Mark Owensand, and members of the committee,

My name is Mike Barsotti. I am a family forest landowner in the Lyons area, a OSU graduate forester with over 45 years working to protect and enhance Oregon's forests, and a member of the Oregon Small Woodlands Association and Oregon Tree Farms System Boards. I am opposed to House Bill 3019 for a number of reasons.

Two years ago, OSWA asked that the legislature hold off until the Secretary of State's audit of OFRI was completed. We now have that audit and we have OFRI's responses which have been articulated in its December 2, 2022 status report to the Sec. of State. Oregon is not served by this bill.

Sections 1, 3, and 4 are ill conceived. In Section 1 removing two thirds of OFRI's funding will cripple its ability to carry out its mandate as defined in ORS 526.605 and sending Harvest Tax funds to the Oregon Forest Land Protection Fund and the Higher Ed Coordinating Commission make little sense. Wildfire funding is a complex mix of state and landowner funds working under the principle of shared responsibility. Arbitrarily moving additional Harvest Tax funds lacks the thoughtful, strategic approach that is needed. In reading the Oregon Environmental Literacy Plan, it appears that it is a K-12 strategy overseen by the Department of Education, not OSU Extension. While OSU Extension has Outdoor Education for middle schoolers, it does not have responsibility for the Environmental Literacy Plan.

In Section 3, how will Oregonians learn how our forests are being managed without sharing the effectiveness of the Forest Practices Act? If there is a concern regarding the information being presented by OFRI, look to OFRI's status update submitted to the Secretary of State's office in December. It's Oregon Forest Resources Institute Quality Information Policy addresses the concern that information be accurate and unbiased. We need an informed public.

The idea that conservation is not part of all OFRI's efforts is just crazy. I use a tremendous amount of OFRI publications, tours and workshops to assist me in managing my tree farm. Our forest is certified as

sustainably managed under the American Tree Farm System's Standards of Sustainability. ATFS's forest certification program is approved by the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC), an umbrella organization that evaluates and endorses forest certification systems throughout the world. OFRI workshops and publications have provided me the solid information I need to have my forest certified as sustainable. One example is an OFRI workshop on the importance of song bird habitat. It changed the way I manage a young forest. Conservation is part of all OFRI information. It has to be consistent with PEFC approved standards of sustainability.

While I can agree that transparency is important for OFRI to have Oregonian's trust in the information they provide, having OFRI staff record all of their communications will be time consuming and provide little value. Again, look to their Quality Information Policy to have trust in their efforts to support and enhance Oregon's forest products industry by advancing public understanding of forests, forest management and forest products.

In Section 4 I also see it as misguided. Having the Forestry Department review OFRI's communications and publications after they have been developed is a waste. Concerns that their efforts are accurate and unbiased needs to be address at the start, not after the efforts have been completed. Again, look to OFRI status report to the Sec. of State to see a much more effective strategy for assuring that their efforts are accurate, reliable and unbiased, and are being presented in an accurate, clear, complete and unbiased manner.

OFRI's mission is to supports and enhances Oregon's forest products industry by advancing public understanding of forests, forest management and forest products. Please reject HB 3019 as it only damages efforts to have sustainably managed private forests in Oregon and to have an educated public regarding the management of these forests and the benefits they provide all Oregonians.