

February 6, 2023

Representative Ken Helm, Chairman
House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Water and Natural Resources
900 Court Street, NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Opposition to HB 3019

Chair Helm and Members of the Committee.

My name is Ken Nygren, and I am a small woodland owner in Yamhill County. My family sustainably manages about 200 acres for timber production. Thank you for allowing me to testify in opposition to HB 3019. This bill will essentially end the Oregon Forest Resources Institute (OFRI) by taking two-thirds of the funding and changing how it operates at a time when it is critically important to educate landowners and the public on the new rules created by the largest overhaul of the Forest Practice Act in its history.

In 2020 through 2022, Landowners and conservationists came together to draw up and pass the Private Forest Accord (PFA). There is a great amount of information that needs to be disseminated to both landowners and the public regarding these new rules for them to be successfully implemented. Without OFRI, who will make that happen? No other organization is solely focused on education of forest management, forest benefits, and forest protection laws. Indeed, the Oregon Legislature created OFRI in 1991 to educate the public and landowners about forest practices. It is needed even more today to fulfill this role.

OFRI is funded exclusively through the Forest Products Harvest Tax, a volumetric tax on harvested timber paid only by timber growers and receives NO General Fund dollars. Without using any additional general funds, OFRI has played a vital role in fostering public awareness through scientific research, public workshops on forest management, K-12 forest education programs, and promoting best practices for sustaining Oregon's forests. Indeed, without OFRI, Oregon Envirothon will cease to serve its students immediately and Oregon will become the only U.S. State to shut down their Envirothon Program. They provide 90% of Oregon Envirothon's funding and our only staff through in-kind contribution. In addition, OFRI produces relevant and well-researched in-depth special reports on topics like water quality, carbon storage, harvest methods, wildlife habitat and wildfire.

OFRI is a great asset to small woodland owners like me while also assisting to educate the public regarding forestry and advocating for the biodiversity of healthy forests. We appreciate that the Oregon Legislature created OFRI in 1991.

Forest management is extremely complex. Not only are we continually learning about the interconnection between all the ecological components that make up a health, sustainable forest, but we need to continually work to better balance the economic and social factors with these ecological components. OFRI, with its public and landowner educational programs, workshops, is an important asset for landowners to educate themselves in these complex items.

Please vote against HB 3019 or any bill to eliminate or change the Oregon Forest Resources Institute or its vital role in educating landowners and the public.

Sincerely,



Ken A. Nygren