

February 7, 2023

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

Re: Opposition to HB3019

Chair Helm and Members of the Committee,

My name is Gail Culbertson and I am writing today on behalf of our family business, Whitewater Forests LLC to register our strong opposition to HB3019. This bill will defund and dismember The Oregon Forest Resources Institute. Without reservation our family supports OFRI in its present structure. OFRI is a great asset, educating the public about sustainable forestry and the relationship of our citizens with forest lands.

Our family stewards 155 acres of forest in Lane and Douglas Counties. We have been recognized for our sustainable practices and were acknowledged as Oregon State Tree Farmers of the year in 2019. Small forest owners like us contribute a great deal to Oregon's environment and economy. Our lands protect and provide wildlife habitat, clean water, open space, and renewable forest products.

OFRI does an accurate, credible, and thorough job of disseminating the factual and reliable story on the crucial role of Oregon's forests. The organization provides on-going education for small forest owners in best practices to sustainably care for their forests. OFRI's educational programs on the importance of forest resources are a valuable teaching tool. I have been personally involved with my children in these public-school programs. They are of excellent quality. Through a variety of programs OFRI advises the public of fire prevention, healthy forests, wildlife, water, and commercial forest products.

The Private Forest Accord enacted in 2020 makes major changes in forest practices as administered under Oregon's Forest Practices Act. The Oregon Department of Forestry through the small landowner program will heavily rely on the expertise of OFRI to publicize the changes in rules and regulations.

To defund OFRI is a huge mistake and HB3019 is a wrongheaded approach by eliminating a leading authority on Oregon's forests. I am bewildered by the repeated efforts initiated by anti-forestry activists to eliminate this exceptional organization. We urge you in the strongest terms to defeat HB3019 and any other legislation determined to undermine The Oregon Forest Resources Institute.

Sincerely,

Gail Culbertson