

Submitter: Donna Bleiler

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Natural Resources

Measure: SB795

I STRONGLY SUPPORT SB 795

This bill would give counties an option to take back forest lands that were deeded over to the State under an agreement that those lands would be managed for the “greatest permanent value” if counties feel the agreement is not being upheld and that they could obtain more value from the lands.

This follows the Linn County lead lawsuit on behalf of the O&C counties against the State in 2019 due to the State’s failure to manage forests to maximize the value to the tax base, and were awarded over a \$1 Billion settlement in past losses. That lawsuit was overturned on appeal, and the Oregon Supreme Court has refused to hear the case, forcing counties to resort to Legislation to get forest lands back and actually manage them.

The decline of forests management practices by the Department of Forestry have increasingly limited logging that has impacted communities in lost jobs, lost tax revenue and lost forest industry that should be supporting basic services.

The Oregon Board of Forestry called a special board meeting to move forward with a proposal that would reduce nearly 35% of the timber harvest in the State Forest. This reduction, which is part of the Western Oregon State Forests Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP), could potentially result in the loss of millions of dollars for the North Coast timber industry, forestry workers, and the budgets of Clatsop, Columbia, and Tillamook Counties.

From 2006 to 2015 Oregon State Forests harvested 56% of net growth, 18% of net growth succumbed to mortality, and 26% of net growth remained as an increase in net volume on the forest. The HCP has been touted as necessary to grow habitat for wildlife but the current forest management plan is already doing this at an astounding rate of 26% of net growth. This kind of knee-jerk management is destroying rural Oregon.