



To: Senate Committee on Natural Resources

From: Julia DeGraw, Oregon Conservation Network, and Oregon League of Conservation Voters

Date: 2/26/2023

RE: OPPOSITION of SB 795, County Takeover of State Forests

Dear Chair Golden, Vice Girod, and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to offer input on SB 795. On behalf of our thousands of members and supporters in Oregon, we would like to register the Oregon League of Conservation Voters, and the Oregon Conservation Network's strong opposition to SB 795, a bill that would allow state forest land to be taken over by the counties.

The Oregon Conservation Network (OCN) is coordinated through the Oregon League of Conservation Voters (OLCV). OCN is a coalition of 42 not-for-profit organizations throughout the state, united to advocate for pro-conservation legislation and to fight policies that threaten our state's natural legacy. OCN is powered by tens of thousands of Oregonians who belong to their membership organizations. We work to promote policies that will ensure a better Oregon for our children – and to fight policies that do not.

We strongly oppose SB 795 and ask that you do not move this bill out of committee. SB 795 attempts to undermine decades of work to balance management of state forests for the "greatest permanent value" (ORS 530), and re-litigate the Linn County lawsuit.

This bill upends the work to carefully balance state forest management for multiple values, including timber harvest as well as clean water, recreation, and wildlife habitat. The Oregon Supreme Court affirmed the authority of the Oregon Board of Forestry to manage state forest for the greatest permanent value for Oregonians when it upheld the court of appeals decision in the Linn County v. Oregon [lawsuit](#). In a [poll](#) commissioned in November by the Oregon Values and Beliefs Center in consultation with the Board of Forestry, Oregonians overwhelmingly support clean water, fish and wildlife, and recreation as management priorities over timber harvest on state forest lands. SB 795 is out of step with the opinion of the courts, and does not address the fundamental tensions inherent in tying timber harvest to local services.

Strong, vibrant communities with access to clean water and healthy forests are essential for all Oregonians. The current system of funding local services with state forest timber revenue creates an unsustainable conflict between important government services and healthy forests, clean water, and outdoor recreation – all of which are needed for resilient local



communities. Timber revenue fluctuates annually depending on log supply and market conditions. Additional revenue sources that are not dependent on timber supply are necessary to supplement timber revenue and stabilize funding for local services.

Since the courts have decided the Linn County lawsuit, we have an opportunity to focus on solutions that stabilize funding for essential services in counties reliant on revenue from state forest timber harvest. Instead of moving forward with SB 795, we urge the committee to support forward-looking solutions that work to resolve these conflicts and diversify revenues for counties and local taxing districts. Now is the time to move together towards a more sustainable future with healthy forests and stable funding for county services. For all these reasons, we urge you to oppose SB 795.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Julia B. DeGraw".

Julia B. DeGraw

Coalition Director

Oregon Conservation Network, and Oregon League of Conservation Voters

Testimony Submitted On behalf of all the OCN Member Organizations:

1000 Friends of Oregon, Association of Oregon Recyclers, Audubon Society of Portland, Beyond Toxics, Cascadia Wildlands, Center for Biological Diversity, Center for Food Safety, Central Oregon LandWatch, Climate Solutions, Defenders of Wildlife, Deschutes River Alliance, Engineers for a Sustainable Future, The Environmental Center, Environment Oregon, Food & Water Watch, Friends of Mount Hood, Friends of the Columbia Gorge, Friends of Family Farmers, Greater Hells Canyon Council, League of Women Voters of Oregon, Native Fish Society, Neighbors for Clean Air, Oceana, Oregon Coast Alliance, Oregon Environmental Council, Oregon Land and Water Alliance, Oregon League of Conservation Voters, Oregon Natural Desert Association, Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility, Oregon Shores Conservation Coalition, Oregon Wild, Pew Charitable Trusts, Renewable Northwest, Rogue Riverkeeper, Sierra Club Oregon Chapter, The Street Trust, Surfrider Foundation, Trout Unlimited, Tualatin Riverkeepers, WaterWatch of Oregon, The Wetlands Conservancy, Wild Salmon Center, Zero Coalition