

Testimony against HB 3003

March 7th, 2023

Dear Chair Marsh and members of the committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to address this bill. I am speaking as an opponent to this bill as written.

Burning Juniper or any wood is not a good climate solution. Using wood in wood products, chipping it for soil amendments for water retention, creation of biochar and many other uses may make more sense for carbon storage in products or soils. When you burn it, you are putting carbon pollution directly into the atmosphere, in fact more per pound of product than if you were burning coal because of the lower intensity of energy.¹

Bioenergy from forest residues and trees is often labeled carbon neutral because eventually new trees planted will take up carbon, but that takes decades. The carbon cycle evaluation doesn't take into consideration loss of carbon uptake from trees removed and the duration of time new trees must grow before they are net carbon neutral. We know even on the west side of Oregon that it takes at least 10 years before plantations are a net carbon sink. The emissions from production stages of the main woody product are often ignored in policy-related calculations (transport, drying, development of pellets) also takes energy to produce.

Building electricity generating plants is infrastructure that will last more than 4-6 decades. So being clear about where the biomass is coming from over time is essential data. This is not clear from the speakers in the hearing.

Increased volume of juniper in the Great Basin region is considered invasive and is purported to use large amounts of water. I did not see this evidence presented but it is widely believed.

So the real question is whether juniper removal is needed to protect water sources and the ecology in our eastern sagebrush areas. And what is the best method to incentivize that? This bill does not address who is motivating loggers to come and cut and remove juniper from these areas because the tax credit is going to electricity producers.

The tax credit presumably would go to Pacific Power for buying and distributing the electricity produced by this as yet not built plant. Will the juniper and other biomass feed the other 16 woody biomass plants or compete with this one plant? There are also 21 facilities in Oregon that use woody biomass to provide space heat; these include schools and hospitals.² Since these are not producing electricity, it seems less likely that they would use juniper specifically because of this bill.

Biomass electricity production as per this bill only requires 50% of the woody biomaterial come from juniper. The Prineville plant is asking for only 30% or greater, without an explanation. I'm gravely concerned it will come from standing trees in eastern forests. For climate purposes, we need our forests

¹ How certain are greenhouse gas reductions from bioenergy? Life cycle assessment and uncertainty analysis of wood pellet-to-electricity supply chains from forest residues. [Biomass and Bioenergy](#). Vol 79, August 2015, pp 50-63.

² <https://www.oregon.gov/energy/energy-oregon/Pages/Bioenergy.aspx>

growing and when cut it should be at longer intervals for carbon sequestration, that is uptake and storage of carbon, and for jobs producing wood products to feed the mills and manufacturers.

In addition, as a physician, I'm gravely concerned about burning woody biomass due to its combustion pollutants. There is much less federal and likely Oregon regulation on biomass plants compared to coal plants emissions of pollutants such as particulates, dioxins and others, which is harmful to those who live in nearby communities.

Cutting juniper also increases invasive cheatgrass and medusahead per OSU research unless other treatments are used as well.³ So this is not the only action needed when juniper is cut. Increases in Juniper is due to fire suppression and also domestic livestock grazing. Perhaps these other issues should be evaluated.

So please table this bill. Let's deliver incentives to rural solar and battery storage which also provide local jobs. Let's fund the Zero-Emission Incentive Fund Appropriation, HB 2613.

Let's develop or incentivize juniper sourced wood for other products.

Catherine Thomasson, MD
6201 NE Oregon St.
Portland, OR 97213
thomassonct@gmail.com

³Dittel, J. et al., Vegetation Response to Juniper Reduction and Grazing Exclusion in Sagebrush-Steppe habitat in eastern Oregon. *Rangeland Ecology & Management*, Vol 71, Issue 2, March 2018, Pages 213-219.