



March 27, 2023

To: House Committee On Climate, Energy, and Environment

Re: HB 3590

Chair Marsh and members of the House Committee on Climate, Energy, and Environment:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on behalf of the more than 74,000 members and supporters of the Oregon Chapter Sierra Club regarding HB 3590, a bill to allocate \$3 million to OSU to conduct a study on conversion of woody biomass residues to low carbon biofuels, and “to manage the lands acquired pursuant to ORS 530.010 to 530.040 so as to secure the *greatest permanent* value of those lands to the state” (emphasis added).

While the Oregon Chapter Sierra Club supports a rapid and just transition away from fossil fuels, Oregon must do so with a comprehensive and complete examination of long-term climate and ecosystem tradeoffs. The study as currently mandated by HB 3590 needs modifications in order to provide the definitive information necessary for examining a pathway for conversion of biomass residues.

Conversion of woody biomass residues comes with multiple tradeoffs, and those tradeoffs must be examined thoroughly. Before any fuel pathway for woody biomass residues is established under Oregon’s Clean Fuels Program, it is imperative that policymakers understand its long-term impacts to Oregon’s ecosystems, in the context of environmental impacts from forest thinning projects that generate these residues.

Therefore, we urge you to amend HB 3590 by adding the following requirements to Section 1.(2)(b), for study of the impact that converting woody biomass residues to low carbon fuels has on:

(E) Natural creation, development, and enhancement of soils, including long-term effects on nutrient cycles.

(F) Loss of forest regrowth potential due to erosion, loss of soil, and soil compaction.

(G) Loss of carbon sequestration from both biomass removal and changes to the live carbon sequestration potential both above and below ground, including root biomass along with fungi and other organisms.

(H) Loss of habitat that supports biodiversity of wildlife that depends on downed wood.



In addition, except for the potential for carbon offsets, Section 3 of HB 3590 appears to completely ignore the economic benefits of leaving the forest in its natural state. We urge you to further amend HB 3590 to include research of these two critical factors that must also be considered:

- 1) Impact of the alteration and loss of natural forest ecosystems on the recreation economy of the state. The large numbers of people who choose to recreate in a healthy, natural ecosystem with large trees and abundant wildlife contribute a significant percentage to the state economy. This includes economic activity related to hunting, fishing, camping, hiking, mountain biking, and other forms of recreation.
- 2) Cost of ongoing degradation of ecosystem and biodiversity services provided by the natural forest, as contrasted to that of the harvested, managed forest. Impacts to water quality and quantity must be considered in an economic context in addition to that of enduring ecological values.

Finally, we agree that open burning of slash piles should be greatly reduced. Oregon should, especially where state forest lands and OSU research forests are concerned, accomplish this by moving away from an industrial model of timber extraction, which includes creation of enormous, problematic slash piles, toward a more *permanent-value* ecological model of forestry.

Thank you for your work on behalf of Oregonians.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Dix, Chair  
Legislative Committee  
Oregon Chapter Sierra Club