

Submitter: Martha Neuringer

On Behalf
Of:

Committee: House Committee On Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and
Water

Measure: HB4106

As a small woodland owner surrounded by industrial forest land, I'm writing to express my strong opposition to HB 4106 and to urge you to oppose it. In this bill, the timber industry is once again attempting to undermine the years of work by parties on all sides to craft a reasonable and balanced State Forest Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP). This bill would seriously set back the attempts at thoughtful, science-based forest management. It would fundamentally change how state forests are managed by requiring the Department of Forestry (ODF) to maximize timber harvest at the expense of all other values, like clean water, fish and wildlife, recreation, and carbon absorption and storage. As drafted, HB 4106 would allow the timber industry to sue the state to force more clearcuts on state forests. This is the last thing we need as the climate crisis becomes ever more severe and threatens the lives and environment of all Oregonians. The science is clear: the Pacific Northwest's mature forests are one of the world's greatest means of sequestering carbon, as well as being critical for clean air and water. They must not be sacrificed to the timber industry, which is increasingly run by wall street hedge funds and real estate investment trusts, not locally-based timber managers who respect Oregon's unique and precious environment.

This terrible bill requires the state forester to set timber harvest targets that would maximize harvest levels. State forests would be managed like private tree farms: mandating short time periods between clearcuts, maximizing profits while minimizing costs, and eliminating remaining mature forests. This bill would upset the current balance that requires state forests to be managed for multiple values to benefit all Oregonians.

HB 4106 would undermine the State Forest Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) that provides balanced protection for 17 species of salmon and wildlife currently listed under the federal Endangered Species Act. Compliance with this federal law is mandatory, but HB 4106 would force the ODF to justify every tree that is protected under the HCP and invite unnecessary legal challenges.

HB 4106 would establish a new right for the timber industry to sue the ODF over state forest timber harvest plans and obtain court orders to force the approval of even more clearcuts on public land. Further, members of the public would have no standing to challenge timber harvest plans unless they personally profited from logging state forests.

The bill would also prevent the ODF from implementing its Climate Change and Carbon Plan. In 2021, the Board of Forestry adopted the Climate Plan for state forests with the goal of establishing Oregon as a national leader in climate-smart forestry. But since HB 4106 requires state forests to be managed like private timber land, it would undermine Oregon's progress toward this climate goal.

Even the bill's reporting requirements are not needed. The ODF already reports harvest plans and revenue to the public on an annual basis after lengthy public comment periods.

For all of these reasons, I strongly urge you to oppose HB 4106.