



## Council of Forest Trust Land Counties

1212 Court St. NE | Salem, Oregon 97301

Chair Helm, Vice Chair Owens and Hartman, members of the committee. For the record, my name is Branden Pursinger and I am here today in my capacity as the Executive Director for the Council of Forest Trust Land Counties. For reference, CFTLC is an organization made up of the 15 counties that deeded their forestland in trust to the state for long term management – you would know these forests as the State Forests. The reference the 15 counties that compose CFTLC include: Benton, Clackamas, Clatsop, Columbia, Coos, Douglas, Josephine, Klamath, Lane, Lincoln, Linn, Marion, Polk, Tillamook, and Washington Counties.

I have submitted for the committee record a document walking the committee through the history of the Trust Land Counties, how we obtained these forests originally, and why we chose to deed them in trust to the state. Also, during that deeding, what the agreement was when these lands were exchanged. I encourage the committee's review of that document and I am happy to follow up with any of you with more information if you would like.

Statute states the Department of Forestry as well as the Trust Counties share in the harvest revenues generated out of these forests. Today, 36.25% of the harvest revenue generated from state forests are allocated to the state forest division to run that portion of the Department of Forestry, while the other 63.75% of the harvest revenue that is generated is allocated to the county where the harvest occurred. Counties then divide out, on average, 60% to the schools, 23% to the special districts, and 17% remains with the county itself. Some counties see a larger share going to one of those three buckets, but schools are by and large the biggest recipient of these funds.

Today, CFTLC is here in support of House Bill 4106. Although the bill is ineligible to move forward due to the session calendar, I do think it is important for the committee to know where the Trust Land Counties are on this bill.

House Bill 4106 attempts to provide a level of certainty in the state forest harvest that is not currently known every year. The bill, with the -1 amendment which was drafted to clear up technical errors in the base bill, calls on the Department of Forestry to set a sustainable harvest amount every five years. Once created, the bill calls on the Department to release that draft plan to the public for review and comment. After the public has had the proposed plan for a set period, the bill states 60 days, the department will make any changes they believe necessary and then issue the final order. The sustainable harvest amount is locked in for the next 5 years.

The bill does allow for the department to adjust this harvest amount due to catastrophic wildfire or other large-scale disturbance. It also permits the department, if needed, to change the sustainable harvest amount and reassess. The bill also would require the state forester to “true up” their harvest amounts, where if the department did not have enough sold or harvested, they would adjust the next subsequent year as necessary to compensate. By setting a sustainable



## **Council of Forest Trust Land Counties**

1212 Court St. NE | Salem, Oregon 97301

harvest amount, the department can ensure over harvesting does not occur while also ensuring under harvesting is being addressed.

The Trust Land Counties are in support of this bill for the simple reason that it provides a level of certainty to what has become a very fluctuating process over the years. The Department has 15 counties where state forest harvesting could occur. The Department gets to decide when to harvest, where to harvest, and how much to sell the contracts for. The counties are then left year after year wondering if they will have the revenue to keep their lights on let alone the other special districts and schools, while also wondering exactly how much will be allocated to them.

15 Counties rely on these timber harvest revenues for their annual operating budgets. Special Districts rely on this harvest revenue to stay afloat and school districts in the Trust Counties rely on this harvest revenue to provide the level of service our kids require.

The Council of Forest Trust Land Counties very greatly appreciates the opportunity to discuss this bill and why we are in support of a commonsense, good governance approach in the management of our forests.