

Senator Meek, Chairman
Senate Revenue and Finance Committee

Senator Meek and members of the committee,

My name is Theresa Hausser and I am strongly in opposition to SB 1593.

I am a small woodland owner in Lane County who was once committed to learning as much as I could about the science of forest health so that I could care for my healthy woodland so that it would remain healthy.

Post-catastrophic fire, I am now committed to learning as much as I can about the science of reforestation and forest health so that I can restore my woodland to a healthy early seral haven for seedlings, wildlife, and carbon sequestration.

OFRI, OSU, OSU Extension, and the Partnership for Forestry Education have been and continue to be essential to these pursuits.

And, in light of the revised FPA, it is not much of an exaggeration to say every small woodland owner in the state is eagerly awaiting OFRI's illustrated handbook of the new rules, so that we might be able to understand them.

SB 1593 starves OFRI of funding through the creation of a new harvest tax and changing the destination of those monies. I don't want to ascribe motive to anyone, so it is unclear if not including funding for OFRI in a new "severance" tax (trees are renewable and thus a severance tax is hardly appropriate) is a regrettable oversight, or a more cynical attempt to eliminate OFRI while not submitting an explicitly anti-OFRI measure.

I cannot fathom why certain entities continue to try to shut down OFRI. Of course, politics is not my field. My field is the health of my woodland, and OFRI REMAINS ESSENTIAL TO MY ABILITY TO RESTORE MY WOODLAND. (I apologize for shouting, but since I have had to make time to testify on behalf of OFRI in, it seems, every legislative session for four years, perhaps shouting is warranted.)

Meanwhile, the taxation structure and the destination of those monies places even more of a burden on smaller landowners, particularly pertaining to fire. How much of the burden for fighting fires in Oregon do the sponsoring legislators want forest landowners to carry? This is not a rhetorical question. If fire indeed affects all of us, all residents should share the burden. We woodland owners who live on our woodlands care for our woodlands, undertake management activities to prevent/mitigate fire, usually on our own dime—and are left shouldering the burden of paying for fires we don't start. And larger landowners frequently fight those fires, with little reimbursement—but would still be taxed.

Once again (I say once again because even in my brief time here in Oregon, provisions in this bill are making at the very least their second appearance), FSC certification is held out as the only worthwhile certification, which limits the ability of smaller woodland owners to participate—at least affordably. Why the ongoing preference for FSC over all other certifications—certifications granted only to demonstrated sustainable forest management? Again, my question is not rhetorical. Will we next legislate whether Apple or Microsoft may be sold in the state, or is that a step too far? (That is rhetorical. Although, given the environmental cost of every element of our computer use, I'm not sure why legislators aren't all over taxation and limitation of computer products.)

I'm not sure whether it's worse that SB 1593 is a terrible bill, or that it again targets woodland owners to bear a disproportionate tax burden, or that it attempts to install a severance tax on a renewable resource, or that it is completely unnecessary.

Again, I close this testimony, as I do all my testimony against anti-woodland owner bills, with an invitation to visit my woodland to see how it is managed, and how expenses far outweigh projected income in my lifespan.

Thank you for your time.

Theresa Hausser