



February 28, 2024

TO: Senate Committee on Finance and Revenue

RE: Comments in support of SB 1593-3

Dear Chair Meek, Vice-Chair Boquist, and members of the Committee,

Please consider these comments in support of Senate Bill 1593-3, submitted on behalf of Cascadia Wildlands. Cascadia Wildlands is a 25-year-old, non-profit conservation organization that works to defend and restore Cascadia's wild ecosystems in the forests, in the courts, and in the streets. Cascadia Wildlands envisions vast old-growth forests, a stable climate, rivers full of wild salmon, wolves howling in the backcountry, and vibrant, diverse communities sustained by the unique landscapes of the Cascadia bioregion. Over 12,000 members and supporters across the country help sustain the organization and its movement for change.

Cascadia Wildlands supports SB 1593-3.

SB 1593-3 would initiate a study on establishing permanent funding for wildfire programs, essential services for counties, and watershed management and infrastructure through the restoration of a graduated severance tax on the value of timber harvest from forestlands in Oregon. It would also incentivize climate-conscious forest management practices including longer harvest rotations and protections for mature and old-growth trees.

Private industrial forestry practices pose significant risks and costs to communities. As reported by the Oregonian, ProPublica and OPB, millions of acres of forest lands are owned by Wall Street investors, through real estate investment trusts (REITs), and pension funds and since the elimination of the severance tax do not pay tax on the value of timber harvested in Oregon.¹ By restoring a fair value tax on harvest from industrial forest plantations, Oregon can fund needed wildfire programs, restore drinking water sources, support rural counties struggling to provide services, and address the impacts of industrial management on fire risk and water supplies.

Industrial forestlands are managed for financial returns and are logged on a short 35- to 40-year rotation cycle. Following harvest, industrial forestlands are replanted as dense, monocrop plantations. Young plantation forests have higher fire risk and severity than older forests that are more resilient to fire.² Dense, young Douglas-fir plantations also reduce water

¹ Tony Schick, Rob Davis, and Lylla Younes, "Big money bought Oregon's forests. Small timber communities are paying the price." June 11, 2020, available at <https://www.opb.org/news/article/oregon-investigation-timber-logging-forests-policy-taxes-spotted-owl/>.

² Harold S. J. Zald et al., Severe fire weather and intensive forest management increase fire severity in a multi-

available in streams during warm summer months by up to 50% compared to older forests.³ Fish and other aquatic species need cool, clean water to survive. Hundreds of thousands of Oregonians source their drinking water from forested watersheds. Industrial forestry practices lead to increased sedimentation and runoff, harming water quality and quantity, increasing wildfire risk and severity, and putting Oregonians in harm's way.

Wildfires are a fact of life in Oregon and are projected to increase in risk and severity as the climate crisis continues. The destruction of homes during the Labor Day fires of 2020 hindered the ability of Oregonians to secure affordable insurance for their homes.⁴ To set communities up for success, we ask that the legislature take steps to provide steady and sufficient funding to support Oregonians in preparing homes and communities to be ignition resistant and survive fast-moving wildfires. Investing in home hardening before fire comes greatly improves the chance of that home withstanding the embers and firebrands generated in wind-driven wildfires like those Oregon experienced in 2020. Helping community members maintain defensible space around their homes is another proven method to prepare for and prevent harmful impacts of fires. By investing in efforts that focus from the home outwards, not the forest in, we can make Oregon fire safe.

SB 1593-3 will help Oregon secure stable funding to protect homes and communities now and in the future. **Cascadia Wildlands urges you to support SB 1593-3.**

Sincerely,



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ownership landscape, *Ecological Applications* (2018). DOI: [10.1002/eap.1710](https://doi.org/10.1002/eap.1710).

³ Perry TD, Jones JA, Summer streamflow deficits from regenerating Douglas-fir forest in the Pacific Northwest, USA, *Ecohydrology*. 2017;10:e1790, <https://doi.org/10.1002/eco.1790>.

⁴ Alex Baumhardt, "Oregon homeowners face soaring premiums, few property insurance options over wildfires," February 26, 2024, <https://oregoncapitalchronicle.com/2024/02/26/oregon-homeowners-face-soaring-premiums-few-property-insurance-options-over-wildfires/>.