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Testimony opposing House Bill 3103

Co-Chair Helm, Co-Chair Owens and members of the House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water

As I have noted previously, Southern Oregon Climate Action Now is a grassroots climate organization of some 2,000 Southern Oregonians. We are concerned about the climate crisis and seek federal, state and local action to address it. We are rural and coastal Southern Oregonians who live on the frontlines of the warming, reducing snowpack, heatwaves, drought, rising sea level and the increasing wildfire risk that these trends conspire to impose on us. Because of our concern, we pay close attention to efforts nationally, statewide, and locally that impact our collective efforts to address the climate crisis. As our logo above indicates, the focus of SOCAN is to promote action through science.

According to OLIS (2025) HB3103 “Directs the State Forester to establish sustainable harvest levels for harvesting timber on state forestland and develop a timber inventory model to inform sustainable harvest levels.” While the concept of promoting sustainable harvest superficially seems beneficial, the question is: What does it mean? Generally, ‘sustainability’ has a meaning similar to that proposed by the Brundtland Commission (Brundtland 1987) as: “Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” Presumably, for Sustainable Forestry we could replace the term ‘development’ with ‘forestry.’ This implies we manage our forests currently with a view to the needs of future Oregonians.

Another concept of sustainability is that used ecologically. Thus, according to a USFS report (Flather et al. undated): “Ecological sustainability is defined as the maintenance or restoration of the composition, structure, and processes of ecosystems including the diversity of plant and animal communities and the productive capacity of ecological systems Ecosystem diversity and species diversity are components of ecological sustainability.” This offers a much broader definition and clearer concept that seems more relevant to what ODF should be achieving in its management of our state forests for all the people of the state.

Now, we ask, what does HB3103 intend ODF to consider when establishing sustainable harvest? The answer is, from an ecological or ecosystem perspective, this is unclear. Section 2 (5) (OLIS 2025) might offer a glimpse: ““Sustainable harvest level” means a planned volume of timber to be sold from available land and harvested thereafter, calculated in five-year increments over at least a one hundred-year period.” Meanwhile, Section 3 A offers that the proposal: “Maximizes the net present value of the state forestland....,” To be consistent with Section 2 (5), we infer this refers solely to the timber value since no other value is suggested in the bill.

It is not clear how this proposal relates to the Habitat Conservation Plan developed by the timber industry and conservation groups as a compromise for managing state forests though HB3103 appears to be yet another effort to undermine that agreement in the interests of promoting logging as the sole goal for management of the people’s forests of Oregon.

In our judgment, HB3103 provides an unreasonably narrow definition of what constitutes sustainability. If HB3103 incorporated some reasonable elements of the USFS concept in its understanding of what sustainable management means, we would feel more confident in the concept. Unfortunately, HB3103 seems to have such a narrow definition of sustainability that it implies the only value to our state forests lies in the timber that can be harvested from them.

According to Baumhardt (2024) the State Land Board “voted unanimously to support a proposed forest management plan for the Elliott’s future that prioritizes research, protecting animal habitat, increasing forest carbon storage to combat climate change and produce income from the sale of carbon credits.” Clearly, the management of Oregon’s state forests is not purely to serve timber harvest. HB3103 should reflect the reality that sustainable management of these forests is expected to reflect other values.

Certainly, the statement regarding Greatest Permanent Value of Oregon’s forests (Oregon undated) suggests a timber harvest focus: “The GPV rule defines Greatest Permanent Value as healthy, productive, and sustainable forest ecosystems that over time and across the landscape provide a full range of social, economic, and environmental benefits to the people of Oregon.” But this does, include “Habitats for native wildlife”, “Productive soil, and clean air and water” and ‘recreation.” In addition, several years ago, Kerr (2020) pointed out that: “Historically, this has meant maximization of timber production and, therefore, maximization of timber receipts from logging of most state forestlands. However, Oregon is changing and its citizens increasingly value forests for their beauty, fish and wildlife, recreation, water quality and quantity, and carbon storage.”

Furthermore, a primary focus for the state’s natural and working lands is to promote carbon sequestration (ACAC 2023). In this context we understand fully that our forests, especially the old growth forests, are superlative agents for sequestering carbon and serving as natural climate solutions. Logging, meanwhile, eliminates the potential for tress to continue sequestering and contributes substantially to the state’s greenhouse gas emissions (e.g., Law et al. 2018).

In relation to the actual goals of HB3104, we note, also, that Section 6 (2a) of HB3103 seeks “A description of how tax revenues and revenues from timber sales that would accrue to counties ...” This apparently gives the game away. What HB3103 seems to promise is a means to undermine our publicly-owned state forests to benefit the treasury of the counties without regard to the myriad of other values that our state forests offer to Oregonians across the state.

It is revealing that nowhere does this bill acknowledge that our publicly owned forests offer tremendous values other than timber. Frankly HB3103 appears to be one step (maybe just half a step) back from the proposal seen elsewhere in 2025 (SB404) that our publicly-owned state forests should be handed over to the counties in order that they may be clearcut for short-term financial return. We acknowledge that rural counties are strapped for funds but do not accept that logging our publicly-owned forests is the solution.

For the above reasons Southern Oregon Climate Action Now strongly urges opposition to HB3103.

Respectfully Submitted

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alan Journet". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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