

Submitter: Ursula Bechert

On Behalf Of:

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

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3103

Dear Co-Chairs Helm and Owens, and Members of the Committee,

I oppose House Bill 3103 and its amendments. This timber industry bill undermines the state forest habitat conservation plan and would result in more clearcuts, more lawsuits, less habitat for salmon and wildlife, and less carbon storage.

HB 3103 prioritizes timber harvest over other values on state forests. HB 3103 requires the state forester to set timber harvest targets by rule. This would subordinate all other plans, policies or directives made by the Board of Forestry. These include policies protecting fish and wildlife habitat, clean water and recreation. Additionally, climate variables are ever-changing, and to assume that we can legislate harvest levels of timber makes no sense.

HB 3103 undermines the new State Forest Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP). The HCP provides balanced protection for 17 species of salmon and wildlife that are listed under the federal Endangered Species Act. ODF is currently following the guidelines of the HCP, while awaiting final approval by federal agencies. HB 3103 would prohibit ODF from using the HCP until it is approved by federal agencies, which would allow clearcuts in habitat protected by the HCP. Given the Trump Administration's cuts to federal agencies, final approval could be delayed for years.

HB 3103 prevents ODF from implementing its Climate Change and Carbon Plan. In 2021, the Board of Forestry adopted a Climate Change and Carbon Plan (Climate Plan) for state forests with the goal of establishing Oregon as a national leader in climate-smart forestry. HB 3103 requires a rule establishing 10-year harvest levels that would preempt the Climate Plan.

HB 3103 would result in more litigation. HB 3103 would establish a new right to sue the Oregon Department of Forestry over state forest timber harvest plans to obtain court orders that compel more clearcuts on public land.

HB 3103 is unnecessary. The state forester already sets 10-year harvest level goals, though not by rule, and they are subject to all other values, policies and plans. The ODF issues annual reports on progress meeting these harvest levels and has a solid track record of meeting harvest goals.

I urge you to oppose this bill. Instead, I encourage this committee to focus on

measures that would increase carbon storage in our state forests and safeguard our public resources for our children and future generations. Please don't let this bill pass out of committee.