

Submitter: Felice Kelly

On Behalf Of:

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

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3103

Dear members of the committee,

I am writing in opposition to HB3103 and its amendments. This bill will limit the flexibility of management on the state forest and cannot provide the predictability that the forest land county commissioners seek.

The state forester is already, by statute, directed to manage the state forests for sustainable harvest. This harvest is part of the mandate for managing the greatest permanent value of the forest, which also reflects the value Oregonians place on the ecosystem services that the forests provide. These valuable ecosystem services include clean water and habitat for salmon and other wildlife. This bill proposes directing the state forester to manage for net present value, which is a calculation that maximizes revenue from logging but does not take into account the value of ecosystem services, since they are not so easily monetized until you have to put in major improvements to your water system, like Salem did a few years ago.

Moreover, this bill would undermine the Habitat Conservation Plan that is currently under review. ODF has done extensive planning, designating some areas of the state forest as reserves for endangered species. To get the HCP approved these reserves need to be appropriate habitat so they are currently off limits for clear cut harvest (which is most harvest on the state forest). HB 3103 directs the state forester to treat these areas as any other part of the forests, including for timber harvest. If these areas are harvested it undermines the plans that have already been submitted to the federal government. If the state is looking for predictability in state forest revenue, the HCP is a crucial piece of that predictability, since the take permits that would be issued as part of HCP approval would shield the state from litigation over timber sales.

County commissioners testified that they want stable funding, but that just highlights the need to uncouple the state forests from direct county funding. One of the biggest sources of variability in this model is the market price for timber, which is volatile and clearly will not be addressed by always being required to log the same number of board feet regardless of the market value! Forestry has many risks— wildfire, insect infestations, wind storms (major issue in the coast range), disease, increasing effects of climate change— and those risks bring inherent variability in revenue both in the short and long terms. If stable funding is what the commissioners really want they should support decoupling the state forest revenues from county revenues.

Yours,
Felice Kelly