



March 26, 2025

Honorable Kathleen Taylor
State Capitol - 900 Court St. NE, S-209
Salem, Oregon 97301

Re: Support for SB 1061 – Local lumber grading training program

Dear Chair Taylor and members of the Senate Committee on Labor and Business,

Wallowa Resources, an Oregon non-profit corporation based in Wallowa County, was created in 1996 under the leadership of the County in response to the loss of local saw mills and the subsequent social and economic impacts. Our mission is to empower rural communities to create strong economies and healthy landscapes through land stewardship, education, and job creation. The loss of saw mills had both short-term and long-term impacts. We are still addressing the challenges of diminished average wages, lower forest values, reduced forest management and more frequent wildfire.

These same impacts are evident across eastern Oregon. The Governor's Eastside Forest Advisory Panel noted in 2004 that *"the reduction in timber supply combined with modernization has caused an equally rapid decline in the number of mills in the region. The total number of mills has declined from 65 in 1968 to 15 in 2004, and another 5 mills are forecasted to close by 2013."* Today we have only seven operating mills in eastern Oregon. EFAP's 2004 report noted further that *"Many areas of eastern Oregon may become untreatable because of a combination of low timber value and high log hauling costs."* This is the reality facing forest landowners today – both small woodland owners as well as many USFS projects.

Today a variety of factors weigh against new investment in saw mill construction in eastern Oregon. But there's been a proliferation of small sawmills. SB 1061 benefits Oregon's small-scale operators, expanding economic opportunities for logs that otherwise might not make it to market. It creates new opportunities in our rural communities, promotes sustainable forest management practices, and improves forest and watershed conditions. It also creates opportunities for full-circle utilization from forest improvement to local home construction – generating important community values and meeting a critical second need for additional workforce housing.

We respect the importance of quality and consistency in lumber grading used for structural use. Similar local use lumber grading programs in Alaska, Tennessee and Wisconsin confirm these potential liabilities can be managed and the risks avoided. We encourage full consideration of the lessons learned from those state programs in designing and implementing the local lumber grading program here in Oregon.

SB 1061 offers a practical, effective solution that benefits Oregon's forests, rural communities, and housing market. ***I respectfully urge your support for this important legislation.*** Thank you for the opportunity to testify

Sincerely

Nils D Christoffersen
Executive Director