

April 3, 2025

House Committee on Climate, Energy, and Environment
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

Re: Central Oregon LandWatch Testimony on HB 3846 - Oppose

Chair Lively, Vice Chairs Gamba and Levy, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on HB 3846. Central Oregon LandWatch (“LandWatch”) is an Oregon non-profit, public interest organization of about 950 members. Its offices are in Bend, Oregon. LandWatch’s mission is to defend and plan for Central Oregon’s livable future, and it has advocated for conservation in Central Oregon for over 35 years.

LandWatch strongly opposes HB 3846 and any attempt to dismantle protections for public lands.

National Forests belong to all Americans, including all Oregonians, and are managed by the United States Forest Service for multiple, vital purposes. These include, wildlife protection, clean water, restoration, wildfire response, wood products, hunting, gathering, and recreation. Further, our National Forests provide critical nature-based services by countering the twin climate and biodiversity crises, by sequestering carbon, and by providing climate refuge for a broad array of fish and wildlife. The Ochoco National Forest, a gem nestled at the far western end of the Blue Mountains, offers each of these values to Oregonians. But by leasing these federal public lands to the Oregon Department of Forestry, this bill promises to undermine the myriad public benefits of the Ochoco National Forest, stifling public input and shifting management towards resource extraction, setting our public lands on a trajectory toward further ecological degradation.

HB 3846 is a misguided approach to public lands management. Among other problematic outcomes, this bill would:

- More than double the acreage ODF manages, by adding 845,498 acres to the 738,402 acres of existing State Forest Lands. This would represent a nearly eightfold increase of forestland east of the Cascades, for an agency already facing drastic budget and leadership woes.
- Lead to an enormous capacity shortfall, given that ODF is ill-equipped to manage recreation, restoration, or wildfire response on this scale. Absent the USFS multiple use paradigm, this bill would threaten to push the Ochoco increasingly toward timber harvest as the only use under ODF.
- Create massive authority and jurisdictional complications that would ultimately hinder, rather than expedite, forest management processes, while also causing substantial



We defend and plan for Central Oregon's livable future

uncertainty for the people, businesses, and Tribes that depend on the Ochoco for recreational, economic, cultural, and sustenance values.

Partnerships between federal and state land managers have always been, and will continue to be important, but this is an inappropriate, counterproductive approach to shifting management regimes. The Ochoco National Forest is critical to the quality of life, scenic beauty, and important ecosystems we enjoy in Central Oregon. This bill would threaten all of that and set an egregious precedent by opening the door to transferring public lands without public input or demonstrated need.

We respectfully urge this committee to not pass HB 3846. Thank you for considering these comments.

Sincerely,



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