

Submitter: Tracy Mehoke

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Natural Resources

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5009

Dear Co-Chairs Frederick and Levy, and Members of the Committee:

I understand that under some circumstances, it may seem appropriate to allow people "freedom" to do as they like with privately-owned lands - to buy or sell or destroy according to the decisions of whoever "owns" that resource. However, when we consider the current situation in the United States - where power and wealth are being at the federal level to cash in long term stable futures in exchange for temporary but destabilizing, profit - and when we it comes to natural resources, especially natural forests and rivers that create and support a liveable habitat not just for animals but for humans as well, it makes sense to create reasonable restrictions that preserve natural wealth and health for the rich and thriving ecosystems that, even if not valued on a federal level, could be a valued natural treasure on a state level.

The Private Forest Accord (PFA) was a landmark agreement regarding Oregon's logging rules on private forestlands. Thirteen timber industry representatives and 13 conservation and fishing groups came together to negotiate broad reforms to state law. It provides significant new protections for fish, stream-dwelling amphibians, wildlife in the forests adjacent to streams, for cold clean water, and for the people who rely on these resources.

A key part of the agreement calls for the state of Oregon to get a federally approved Habitat Conservation Plan across more than 10 million acres of private forestlands.

However, without a federally approved Private Forest Accord Habitat Conservation Plan by 2027, the new rules roll back entirely to the outdated standards.

Please support full funding in the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's budget (HB 5009) for the Private Forest Accord Grant Program. The PFA Grant Program should be fully funded at \$20M. This reflects the state's commitment of \$10M annually to this grant program under the PFA authorizing legislation from 2022 (SB 1501). Importantly, this commitment is matched by a \$2.5M annual contribution from the timber industry, which increases to \$5M annually after federal approval of a Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP). This program invests in restoration projects across the state to conserve and protect habitat for fish and amphibians.

It is not only forestry and timber industries that should be valued, but also natural

river ecosystems and the watersheds that support fish and human life and health as well. We are all richer when we preserve the treasures that we have. When we allow them to be depleted in the name of individual or private gain or "freedom" for a few, it limits the future for everyone.

I hope the State legislature will choose in favor of good stewardship, and of preserving and supporting the long term wealth and health of Oregon and its natural resources.

Thank you,
Tracy