

Submitter: Kyle Collins

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 am writing to you today to voice my support for fully funding the Private Forest Accord (PFA). The work and compromise involved in this agreement is precious and efforts to underfund the Accord are likely to exacerbate long standing tensions between environmental interests and the timber industry in our state. The years of negotiations involved in passing the PFA should be respected and supported by committing to fully fund the PFA and start the long work of repairing of waterways, wildlife populations, and a beleaguered wood products industry that is an important part of the our economy.

Since the 1990s, Oregon has made tremendous investments in our forestry and wildlife protection efforts, but unfortunately we seen a continued decline in the health of natural environments, particularly aquatic and riparian areas. Populations of anadromous fish have declined in nearly all populations over this time period, demonstrating that we need more drastic efforts and greater incorporation of the best scientific evidence available to help sustain and recover these wildlife populations. Additionally, we need to provide certainty for landowners and industry officials who hope to capitalize on their timber resources and provide a much needed supply of raw materials across the country and internationally. The PFA sets a clear precedent that we can improve our water, fish, and wildlife resources, while also setting world class forestry standards. For years of living in this state I have unfortunately witnessed the destruction of poorly managed timber sites leading directly to falling fish populations. This has only resulted in animosity among interest groups with increased litigation, costs for consumers, and imperiled water quality. As an avid outdoorsman, I can immense satisfaction in visiting our rivers and streams knowing that healthy fish populations are supported therein. As a new father, I also want to be able to share these same experiences with my son in the future, but without changes to the status quo, I fear this opportunity may be lost to him.

We need to ensure that the state has a clear path to securing a federally approved Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) by 2027. The provisions of the PFA is the only pathway to a federally approved HCP that has been agreed on and endorsed by all parties. If we want to continue having meaningful timber production in our state, we need to do so under a plan that has scientifically objective measurements for forest health and long term sustainability.

I urge you to fully fund the PFA Grant Program at \$20M in the 2025-2027 state budget. This investment will show that our state is committed to providing at least \$10M annually to this grant program under the PFA authorizing legislation from 2022. Additionally, this state contribution would be combined with a \$2.5M annual contribution from the timber industry that increases to \$5M annually after federal approval of a Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP). This long-term investment is a core part of the negotiated agreements and to securing a federally approvable HCP by December 2027. Investments of this magnitude and duration are the only hope we have of changing the trajectory of our damaging forestry practices, while also acknowledging that timber is an indispensable resource for our state and country. We must find a fully funded middle path to extract timber, but recover our natural spaces and wildlife. If the PFA is not fully funded, then Oregon's path to a federally approved PFA HCP is uncertain and possibly forgone. Please stand up for our natural heritage and help usher in reforms to our timber industry which are long overdue.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide public comments.

Sincerely,

-Kyle Collins, Bend, OR 97701