

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 you today to voice my support for fully funding the Private Forest Accord (PFA) in the upcoming state budget. For decades, our state has been the site of a long term struggle between conservation/environmental groups and the timber industry. Despite years of litigations and tweaks around the edges, we have continued to see both declining timber revenues for our local communities, and struggling fish and wildlife populations. The PFA offers a substantive way forward that can actually help recover our fisheries, wildlife populations, and provide some certainty for private property owners hoping to capitalize on their timber resources. We need to fund solutions such as this to break long standing deadlock and actually make meaningful progress for our fisheries, sensitive landscapes, and rural communities dependent in part on natural resources. The PFA is the only pathway forward that has been agreed upon by most, if not all, stakeholders involved and this is a rare opportunity to change our current status quo, which is leading us inexorably towards greater ecological degradation. We have already made significant investments in the PFA, and the plan deserves full funding to further those previous efforts. Perhaps most importantly, the PFA is likely the only option our state has for securing a federally approved Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) by 2027. Despite ongoing political uncertainty at the national level, a federally approved HCP is a massive step to begin reducing conflicts in our region, while also finally addressing some of the main issues causing the long-term decline of our waterways and fish populations. As someone who spends countless hours in our natural spaces, I see the PFA as a positive step to improving the areas and furthering the environmental health of our state. Additionally, as a new parent, I want to be able to share healthy waterways and fish with my son, and without the PFA, I feel we may be headed to an uncertain future and could lose some of our irreplaceable natural heritage.

I urge you to fully fund the Private Forest Accord Grant Program at \$20M in the 2025-2027 state budget. This amounts demonstrates the state's commitment of \$10M annually to this grant program under the PFA authorizing legislation from 2022 (SB 1501). This contribution would be in addition to a \$2.5M annual contribution from the timber industry that increases to \$5M annually after federal approval of a Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP). We need both public and private money, and buy in from all stakeholders involved to help the PFA succeed. This long-term investment is a core part of negotiations agreed to over the past several years and again it represents the best opportunity we have to secure a federally approvable HCP by

December 2027. It is far from certain that a federally approved HCP would be established without a commitment on behalf of the state fund the conservation programs outlined in the PFA. Funding the programs is the only meaningful way to reform our timber industry in a way that provides for our economy, but helps to recover and sustain our natural resources for the long term.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide my comments.

Sincerely,

-Kyle Collins, Bend, OR 97701