

Submitter: Gail Culbertson
On Behalf Of: small woodland owner
Committee: House Committee On Revenue
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3489

April 19, 2025

We strongly Oppose HB 3489

Chair Nathanson, Vice Chairs Reschke, Walters and Committee Members, Three generations of our family own and steward three parcels of forest land in Lane and Douglas Counties. We are active members of the Oregon Small Woodlands Association and our forests are certified for sustainability under the Oregon and American Tree Farm system guidance. We care deeply about our forests and surrounding community. In 2019, Whitewater Forests, our family-owned business, was acknowledged as the Oregon Tree Farmers of the year. This honor recognized our sustainable forest practices, community involvement and our contribution to the environment.

HB 3489 is bad legislation and poor public policy that will harm and undermine the legacy of Oregon's family forest owners.

Aside from proposing an unwarranted tax increase as much as 800% on timber harvests under the false premise of "fire protection," HB 3489 language will actually repeal the critical structure for funding and administering wildfire protection in Oregon. This unconscionable bill will destroy the efforts of diverse stakeholders in the "Wildfire 35" committee seeking to reach compromise on HB 3940 and address Oregon's wildfire funding emergency.

Instead, HB 3489 uses smoke and mirrors to siphon off 40% of revenue collected to county general funds with no promise of dedication to fire protection.

HB 3489 purposely eliminates funding for the Oregon Forest Research Institute.

OFRI is a credible and reliable source of education on sustainable forestry practices, promotion of wildlife habitat and protection of water quality. OFRI's work is highly valued as an authoritative resource of best practices by small forest owners. OFRI is closely coordinating with the Oregon Department of Forestry to create educational materials supporting the "Private Forestry Accord." No other organization is prepared for this role. OFRI is a timely and crucial source of information on wildfire mitigation and restoration for rural residents and forest owners.

HB 3489 forces a new punitive tax on small forest owners that will be many times higher than what we presently pay. This proposed "severance tax" is an outmoded idea that encourages a perverse incentive to grow lower value short rotation trees. It also includes the mistaken notion of taxing our costs of production. This amounts to layering of taxes that further discourages continued use of forestland for growing forests.

HB 3489 puts the government in the business of favoring FSC certification over other programs. Our forestland is certified under American Tree Farm, a group of 74,000

forest owners nationwide, which was established in 1941. There is no evidence that FSC is superior to our ATFS certification program. We urge forest owners to enlist the certification that assists them with their objectives. Oregon Government should not be giving preferential treatment favoring one over another.

Proponents of the bill disingenuously claim HB 3489 “doesn’t target small forest owners.” Facts are much different as the bill greatly increases our tax burden and will contribute to the demise of family forestry, discouraging the goal of “keeping forests as forests.”

HB 3489 is faulty public policy, the consequences of this ill-conceived bill will cause great harm to family forest owners. We encourage you to reject HB 3489.

Sincerely from a small forest owning family,

Gail Culbertson
Springfield, Oregon

Elisa Turpen
Newberg, Oregon

Chris Culbertson
Tualatin, Oregon