

Submitter: Rand Schenck
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Revenue
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3489

Testimony in Support of HB 3489, Reinstatement of the Timber Severance Tax

Chair Nathanson and Members of the House Committee on Revenue

I urge you to support this bill to reinstate the Timber Severance Tax. I was stunned several years ago when OPB and Politico reported that as a result of changes to the timber severance tax some 30 years that over \$3 billion of revenue has been lost primarily to rural communities to help support critical services ranging from schools to public safety. We now have an opportunity to both address these critical rural services as well as address new needs that did not exist 30 years ago, namely wildfires that are increasing in severity and frequency as a result of the climate crisis.

Last year the state faced over \$300 million in wildfire costs that were not anticipated. That money came out of the general fund, from all taxpayers in Oregon. That simply is not fair. The largest timber companies, REITs, Real Estate Investment Trusts, have been getting off virtually scott free from paying for the ever increasing cost of protecting private lands from wildfires. They need to pay their fair share. The burden should not be primarily on the small forest land owners.

We need to do much more to help rural communities increase their resilience in the face of these ever increasing wildfires. These costs are not insignificant as we need to do very targeted thinning and prescriptive burns near these at risk communities not just once but on an ongoing basis.

As a climate activist I also want to point out the harms resulting from the typical 35 – 40 year logging rotation cycle that result from how these REITs manage their forests. Trees at that age are essentially in their early teen years in terms of carbon sequestration and storage. Doubling that rotation cycle to 70 - 80 years would more than double the carbon storage as well as double the timber volume. Rather than practice climate smart forestry these REITs are contributing to the climate crisis, to damaged watersheds, and to loss of biodiversity. I encourage you to consider how this bill could be improved to incentivize the most effective natural climate solution we have, to simply grow trees longer – especially knowing that here in Oregon our older forests are among the most carbon dense forests in the world.

Sincerely,

Rand Schenck
MCAT Forestry and Natural Lands Lead

**The OLCV sponsored group, MCAT, Mobilizing Climate Action Together, is a community of volunteers working to ensure that Oregon builds a healthy climate and green-energy economy for future generations. We participate in the Oregon Climate Action Plan coalition and partner with others on coordinated action. We actively organize to elect legislators that will work for strong climate legislation.