

To: House Committee on Revenue
Nancy Nathanson, Chair
E. Werner Reschke and Jules Walters, Vice-Chairs
Members of the Committee
From: Susan Watkins, small forest landowner
13440 SW McCabe Chapel Road, McMinnville, Oregon 97128
Re: HB 3489

I OPPOSE this measure.

My husband and I own 48 acres of working forestland outside McMinnville. During the 30+ years we have owned the property, we have worked closely with the Oregon Department of Forestry, Oregon State University College of Forestry Extension, and the Oregon Small Woodlands Association to create a sustainable, healthy forest where trees are free to grow and wildlife abounds.

I have been a Master Woodland Manager for more than twenty years, including eight years on the Committee for Family Forestlands advising the Board of Forestry about small forest issues. During my time working with forestry policy, I relied heavily on OFRI, the Oregon Forest Resources Institute, for data and education resources.

While we can all agree that wildfire prevention and suppression need to be more robustly funded in Oregon, HB 3489 is NOT the way to accomplish this goal.

A public-private workgroup (the Wildfire 35 Committee) has been working on ways to solve this problem -- but HB 3489 disregards their hard work. We have recently seen how such partnerships can produce good and productive results with introduction of the PFA, the Private Forest Accord, now translated into law. The same stakeholder process (including landowners, the public, and environmental watchdogs) can produce a sound solution for wildfire. We should not be ignoring their efforts.

HB 3489 also eliminates funding for OFRI. This is a no-go for small woodland owners. Despite past errors, rectified now, OFRI remains the #1 source of information and education for landowners regarding forestry, forestry laws, wildlife and habitat, jobs, and so much more. Small landowners need OFRI, which currently is funded 100% by forestry taxes. OFRI must remain in any new funding regime.

HB 3489 purports to give us small landowners a "break" by reducing taxes by 50% if our forests are certified by a particular certification agency, SFC. Do you know how much that costs? Most of us (most small forests are under 100 acres) don't harvest enough to take advantage of higher prices for SFC-certified wood products. My forest is certified by American Tree Farm System. I work hard to maintain that certification, but my efforts would count for nothing under HB 3489.

In short, HB 3489 purports to be a quick fix to Oregon's wildfire funding woes, but has too many negative impacts to serve as the welcome solution we are all searching for.

VOTE NO.