

Dear Chair Nathanson, Vice Chairs Reschke and Walters, and members of the House Committee on Revenue:

My name is Kate McMichael and I am a small woodland owner in Lane County. I am writing in profound opposition to HB 3489.

In 2019, my wife and I poured our retirement savings into the purchase of 39 acres of healthy forestland in Vida. In 2020, it burned in the Holiday Farm Fire. The intervening years have been a crash course in post-catastrophic reforestation in a changing climate—as well as in the political whirlwind that is forest policy and politics in Oregon. These same years have also been increasingly disheartening as the seeming divide widens between those who care *about* Oregon's forests (legitimately all Oregonians) and those whose lives are dedicated to caring *for* those same forests—to the detriment of all of us, but particularly to the detriment of our forests. Although good intent may be the starting point for many forestry related legislative ideas, mischaracterization and misinformation about actual forest practices and forest science—and the people actually impacted by these ideas and the policies that emerge from them—the legislation itself more regularly enshrines anti-forestry policy cloaked in pro-forest language. HB 3489 is a good case in point.

There are multiple reasons to oppose this bill—as there were when I wrote in opposition to earlier iterations in 2021 and 2023. Highlights among these include:

- a severance tax presumes a solely extractive enterprise while sound forest stewardship is inherently renewable and sustainable;
- this bill disproportionately impacts the good stewardship practices of small forestland owners by making clearcutting more economically viable than selective harvests or thinning to provide for the growth of more mature forest stands;
- the inexplicable elevation of Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification—which is cost prohibitive for most small landowners—over American Tree Farm/Oregon Tree Farm System (AFTS/OTFS) certification—which provides certification of stewardship practices according to internationally approved standards at no cost to landowners (I am proud of our OTFS certification and the sign that proclaims that our Certified Family Forest is committed to sound stewardship and finds value in Wood, Water, Wildlife & Recreation);
- the dismantling of the current wildfire funding structure to create a new, county-based system with no oversight to insure that the funds actually go to fighting wildfire (already deemed an untenable choice by the Wildfire 35);
- the seeming disregard of HB 3940, the concurrent bipartisan bill to reframe and fund wildfire mitigation and suppression efforts as an all-Oregon issue rather than focusing on new ways to additionally tax all woodland owners, large and small, who already shoulder the double burden of wildfire-related assessments as well as the potential loss of their forests to catastrophic fire.

These objections to HB 3489 only scratch the surface of the problems with this bill and its potential impact; any one of these is reason enough to question why this bill is even being considered.

While the above concerns, serious as they are, are clearly enough to inspire me to spend the morning writing yet more testimony rather than spending my time in the woods, actually working on care of my woodland, the heart of my reason for providing testimony goes even deeper: the insidious devaluation of forest education as key to sound forest stewardship in Oregon. What I find most egregious and personally damaging in this bill is its semi-hidden defunding of the Oregon Forest Resources Institute. OFRI is an invaluable resource to all Oregonians interested in forest health and resilience, in sound and sustainable forest

management. OFRI is particularly vital to small forestland owners like my wife and me, who work every day and in every decision, to care for our (in our case fire- and climate-battered) woodlands. OFRI makes scientific research and best practices accessible to non-experts. Their publications and educational resources support small woodland owners in making sustainable forest stewardship the cornerstone of their forest management. Additionally, multiple programs, such the Women Owning Woodlands Network (WOWNet) and the Master Woodland Manager (MWM) Program (which extends the outreach capacity of OSU Forestry & Natural Resources Extension) rely on OFRI funding. The *Oregon's Forest Protection Laws: An Illustrated Manual*—the latest, post-PFA version just came out—translates the multiplicity of new forest protection rules into language and concepts that both ODF stewardship foresters and small woodland owners rely on to insure that small woodland owners can both know and follow all the rules.

A great deal of eloquent testimony against HB 3489 has already been submitted. It is well worth reading and considering. HB 3489 was a bad idea in 2021 and 2023. It is still a bad idea in 2025. For the sake of Oregon's forests and Oregon's forest landowners, please stop this bill from moving forward.

Thank you for your consideration.

Kate McMichael
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