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SOCAN Testimony opposing House Bill 4105

Co-Chairs Helm & Owens and members of the House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water:

I write as Cofacilitator of Southern Oregon Climate Action Now, a grassroots climate organization of some 2,000 Southern Oregonians. We are concerned about the climate crisis and seek federal, state and local action to address it. We are rural and coastal Southern Oregonians who live on the frontlines of the warming, reducing snowpack, heatwaves, drought, rising sea level, and the increasing wildfire risk that these trends conspire to impose on us. Because of our concern, we pay close attention to efforts nationally, statewide, and locally that impact our collective efforts to address the climate crisis. As our logo above indicates, the focus of SOCAN is to promote action through science.

In what looks like a rerun of the 2025 HB3031 travesty that passed 9:0 and was fortunately thwarted in the Joint Committee on Ways and Means, we are now confronted with HB4105 (OLIS, 2026). The only difference seems to be that the rerun acknowledges Habitat Conservation efforts but still deserves to be called the ‘Log Oregon’s Forests Bill.’ According to HB4105 the focus is Section 1(3) “the State Forester shall adopt by rule a sustainable timber harvest level:” While the concept of promoting sustainable harvest superficially seems beneficial, the question is: What does it mean? Generally, ‘sustainability’ has a meaning similar to that proposed long ago by the Brundtland Commission (Brundtland 1987) as: “Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” Presumably, for Sustainable Forestry we could replace the term ‘development’ with ‘forestry.’ This implies we manage our forests currently with a view to the needs of future Oregonians.

Callicott and Mumford (1997) offered the following as the definition of 'ecological sustainability' from a conservation perspective as: "...the maintenance in the same place and time of ... human economic activities and ecosystem health." This offers a much broader definition and clearer concept that seems more relevant to what ODF should be achieving in its management of our state forests for all the people of the state and in perpetuity. Ecosystem diversity and species diversity are critical components of ecological sustainability.

Now, we ask, what does HB4105 intend ODF to consider when establishing sustainable harvest?

The answer, from an ecological or ecosystem perspective, is unclear. However, Section 1 (c) (OLIS 2026) offers a glimpse: "Sustainable timber harvest level" means a planned volume of timber to be harvested over a 10-year period, in annual increments, from available state forestland." There is no mention of maintaining a healthy forest, merely harvesting a given amount each year for ten years regardless of the impact that might have on the health of the forest. It is quite possible for this goal to be fulfilled such that after ten years there is not a tree left in our forests. Please, let's develop a concept for tree harvest that does not allow such an outcome.

Section 1 (6) then decrees "The State Forester shall, to the degree consistent with other applicable legal requirements, manage available state forestland to produce the applicable sustainable timber harvest level adopted under this section." Again, there is no mention of maintaining a healthy forest that serves other values.

If HB4105 were to incorporate some reasonable elements of the Callicott and Mumford (1997) concept in its understanding of what sustainable management means, we would feel more receptive to the concept. Unfortunately, HB4105 seems to have such a narrow definition of sustainability that it implies the only value to our state forests lies in the timber that can be harvested from them. In contrast to HB4105, according to Baumhardt (2024), the State Land Board "voted unanimously to support a proposed forest management plan for the Elliott's future that prioritizes research, protecting animal habitat, increasing forest carbon storage to combat climate change and produce income from the sale of carbon credits." We argue that the management of Oregon's state forests is not, and should not be, purely to serve timber interests. HB4105 should reflect the reality that sustainable management of these forests is expected to reflect other values.

The statement regarding what constitutes the Greatest Permanent Value (GPV) of Oregon's forests (LLI undated) indicates: "As provided in ORS 530.050, "greatest permanent value" means healthy, productive, and sustainable forest ecosystems that over time and across the landscape provide a full range of social, economic, and environmental benefits to the people of Oregon. These benefits include, but are not limited to:

- (a) Sustainable and predictable production of forest products that generate revenues for the benefit of the state, counties, and local taxing districts;
- (b) Properly functioning aquatic habitats for salmonids, and other native fish and aquatic life;
- (c) Habitats for native wildlife;
- (d) Productive soil, and clean air and water;

- (e) Protection against floods and erosion; and
- (f) Recreation."

We note that this GPV incorporates a wide array of values in addition to timber harvest, not one of which is acknowledged in HB4105. Given our concern about the climate crisis and the need to promote natural climate solutions such as carbon sequestration in our forests (e.g., OCAC 2025a), even with harvest (e.g., Adams 2018; Bellassen & Luyssaert 2014), we concur with Kerr (2020) that the GPV "should define "greatest permanent value" as carbon storage and sequestration—not timber production—and the associated values of biological diversity conservation and restoration, watershed protection and restoration, and compatible forms of recreation."

Furthermore, a primary focus for the state's natural and working lands is, indeed, to promote carbon sequestration (OCAC 2025b). In this context we understand fully that our forests, especially the old growth forests, are superlative agents for sequestering carbon and serving as natural climate solutions (e.g., Gray 2015). Logging, meanwhile, eliminates not only the stored carbon but also the potential for trees to continue sequestering and contributes substantially and directly to countering the state's greenhouse gas emissions (e.g., Law et al. 2018).

We note that according to OVBC (2023a) fully 75% of Oregonians argue that the state should either maintain environmental quality or increase environmental protection, versus just 15% who argue the state should relax environmental regulations (OVBC 2023). Meanwhile, OVBC (2023b) report that fully 63% of Oregonians feel, or lean towards, the concept that "Stronger environmental laws and regulations are worth the cost" as opposed to 37% who feel or lean towards the opinion that "Stricter environmental laws and regulations cost too many jobs and hurt the economy." Meanwhile, that same OVBC report suggested that fully 76% of Oregonians believe or lean towards the opinion that "Climate change requires us to change our way of life, drive less, and live more simply, while but 24% believe or lean towards the notion that "If climate change becomes a problem, we can deal with it later." The evidence suggests that HB4105 runs 100% counter to the environmental views of the majority of Oregonians. The bill serves a very small subset of Oregonians while largely serving the out-of-state Timber Investment Management Organizations and Real Estate Investment Trusts (e.g., Bliss 2009; Sass et al. 2020).

Section 3 of the bill totally gives the game away! HB4105 is not about promoting management for healthy forests for the multiple benefits that our state forests accord us and the Statutes demand they should provide. HB4105 is all about profits for loggers and timber companies, and as a side benefit maybe – attorneys. In relation to the actual goals of HB4105, we note that Section 3 is all about litigation. This Section underscores exactly how disruptive to our state's forests HB4105 would be if enacted, but also how litigious its result would be.

In summary, HB4105 is a transparent travesty with a simple goal of promoting logging of Oregon's Public forests, the forests of the people of Oregon. The use of the term 'sustainable harvest' should not persuade legislators into thinking this proposal seeks healthy forests to serve the values contained in the statutory identification of Greatest Permanent Value for our public forests; it does not! Nor should legislators be persuaded that the proposal serves the will

of the people of Oregon. The polling results reported by the Oregon Values and Beliefs Center tell us clearly this is not the case.

For the above reasons Southern Oregon Climate Action Now strongly urges rejection of HB4105

Respectfully Submitted



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