

Submitter: Tommy Hough

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB4105

Dear Co-Chairs Helm and Owens, Vice Chair McDonald, and Members of the Committee,

Tommy Hough from Washington County. I oppose House Bill 4105. This timber industry-driven bill prioritizes logging over all other values in our state forests, and is an unacceptable proposition to my family, neighbors, and I.

HB 4015 undermines the state forest Habitat Conservation Plan and would lead to more clearcuts, more industry lawsuits, less habitat for fish and imperiled wildlife, and less carbon storage that our state public forests already provide. As I believe you're aware, this bill is extraneous and unnecessary. The Department of Forestry already has processes in place to establish timber "harvest" goals, and regularly meets or exceeds those goals at the expense of water quality, imperiled species, and carbon storage.

By creating a new, special right for the timber industry to sue the Department of Forestry to force more logging on state forests, this bill will also prove to be pointlessly expensive, as it will require costly rulemaking and lead to non-stop litigation which the state will be obliged to defend against at taxpayer expense. The state should not be obliged to afford unneeded legislation with such an enormous fiscal impact.

I would add the threats facing our forests at the federal level are unprecedented, and are being driven by an administration and Congress are actively working, at this moment, to undermine our nation's best, most effective conservation policy, including the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule, the 1964 Wilderness Act, and the 1994 Northwest Forest Plan. As Oregonians, we must stand as a bulwark against these environmental abuses and threats to our conservation heritage by preserving our forests, waters, open space, and species across our state.

You may feel the decisions you make in Salem are divorced from nihilistic federal policy, but that's not necessarily the case — this spring the marbled murrelet won't differentiate as to what agency or governmental entity cut down its home while it was at sea seeking sustenance for its chicks. Our times demand greater responsibility and greater conservation instead of denying our state forest for more timber for overseas markets.

My family, neighbors, and my community urge you to oppose this bill. We encourage this committee to instead focus on measures that will increase carbon storage in our state forests, aggressively preserve old-growth and mature stands, and safeguard our public state forests and waterways for current and future generations.

Please do not let this bill pass out of committee.

Thank you for your kind consideration.

Sincerely,

Tommy Hough