

Submitter: Chris Page

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, and Members of the Committee,

I oppose House Bill 4105 and its amendments. This bill is short-sighted because it prioritizes clearcutting Oregon's state forests rather than preserving those forests for Oregon's future. Specifically, our state forests support a substantial part of Oregon's outdoor recreation economy, which brings in over \$550 million and provides more than 10,500 jobs. As someone who has engaged in quite a bit of recreation in state forests, no one recreates in the moon-like landscapes that are created through clearcutting. This bill almost guarantees the spread of moonscapes in our state forests by (1) directing the State Forester to increase harvest levels beyond the sustainable harvest levels that the State Forester already sets and (2) providing a legal cause of action for timber companies to sue the ODF for alleged violations of the timber harvest rule, creating endless litigation and limiting the ODF's ability to manage state forests for multiple values.

My family and I care deeply about state forests and our public lands. Not only do we recreate by hiking, fishing, or otherwise exploring them, but we strongly value their essential role in providing clean drinking water, providing wildlife habitat, and sequestering carbon to benefit our climate. This bill prioritizes clearcutting over those values to the detriment of current Oregonians and future residents of our state. We owe it to those future generations to have their interests in mind when deciding how to steward our state forests. Put simply, our state forests are worth more to the public standing than at the saw mill.

Mature and old-growth forests have been decimated by years of logging. Those forests clean drinking water, resist fires better than younger, plantation-style forests, and store more carbon in the soil than young forests. They also provide dwindling habitat for vulnerable fish and wildlife. Our state forests do all that and provide outdoor recreation opportunities. But only if they remain standing.

Consideration of this bill must also take into account the current assault by the federal government on public forests. The federal government is increasing harvest limits for federal forests in Oregon and working hard to undercut protections for wildlife, such as the Endangered Species Act. Indeed, the recent amendment process for the Northwest Forest Plan has made clear that legacy forests under federal control in Oregon will be subjected to substantial increases in harvesting. In that context, we have an obligation to protect our state forests to counteract what's

happening in federal forests. Why would we increase harvest levels in state forests at the same time that the federal government mandates increases in federal forests? Oregonians clearly cannot rely on the federal government to ensure the existence of legacy forests on public land, so our state government must do so.

In sum, this bill would result in more clearcuts and less habitat for vulnerable fish and wildlife. It would lead to less mature and old-growth forests, and less carbon storage on the landscape at a time when climate change is becoming more severe (our current drought and unseasonably warm weather, in addition to our constant summer forest fires, are clear examples of the impact of climate change). I expect my public leaders to support a vision of public lands that benefits Oregonians now and in the future. This bill does the opposite.

I urge you to oppose this bill. Instead, I encourage this committee to focus on measures that would protect Oregon legacy forests, safeguard fish and wildlife, and protect communities drinking water for our children and future generations.

Please oppose this bill and ensure it does not pass out of committee.

Sincerely,

Chris Page