

Submitter: Martin Fisher
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water
Measure, Appointment or HB4105
Topic:

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

I strongly oppose House Bill 4105 and urge you to please prevent this bill from passing out of committee.

This bill would severely and dangerously weaken protections for Oregon's forests—and this at a time when we need, more than ever, to increase protections for our forests. The timber harvest rule in this bill prioritizes logging over the health of habitats for fish and wildlife, which is the wrong priority for our state. The science is clear that these habitats are experiencing damage and are shrinking because of climate change. We should focus on taking steps to strengthen and protect these habitats, not weaken them.

Large and mature trees play a vital role in sequestering carbon. Cutting and removing trees releases the carbon they store, which further contributes to climate change—the major threat our world is facing. With our forests, Oregon has a wonderful opportunity to contribute to fighting and staving off climate change—if we commit to protecting our forests, not increasing the rate at which we're cutting them down.

In addition, outdoor recreation is an important part of Oregon's economy and presents opportunities for further economic growth and job creation in our rural communities. Increasing logging on lands in which Oregonians and visitors hike, climb, camp, fish, hunt, and spend time relaxing in nature and connecting with loved ones is counterproductive to this initiative.

Increasing logging is detrimental to our state's waterbodies, including drinking water sources. When trees are cut down, this decreases the shade over streams, rivers, lakes, and other waterways, raising water temperatures. This is detrimental to fish and other wildlife that rely on cool streams to survive. Logging causes increased sedimentation and pollution in waterways, which degrades our water supply. Half a million Oregonians rely on state forest watersheds for their drinking water, and this bill would put their water sources at risk.

It would be an insult to allow this bill to move forward after all the hard work that recently went into the state forest Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP), which so many people fought so hard for. This bill would harm the Department of Forestry's

implementation of the HCP. It is egregious to consider a bill that flies in the face of the HCP, which is a vital plan that informs how we manage our forests.

Another outrageous component of this bill is that it would grant timber companies the right to sue the state based on logging levels. I cannot believe the legislature is even considering legislation that would cost taxpayers money (during a challenging and uncertain economic time for many of us) in order to benefit an industry that has been the recipient of favor after favor from this state (namely, huge tax breaks at the cost of taxpayers and local communities). Oregonian taxpayers do not owe the timber industry money. We do not owe them additional breaks and favors. We should not bear the burden of expensive litigation. And we should not give the timber industry an excuse to force clearcuts within our state forests. As if this bill weren't already terrible enough, this component of it makes my blood boil, and I can imagine that the vast majority of Oregonians would feel the exact same way. I can't imagine your constituents would be happy with this moving forward.

Please stop this bill in its tracks. I encourage you instead to focus on measures to protect our forests, fish and wildlife habitat, and wild and beautiful forests.

Thank you very much for considering my testimony and for your time.

Martin Fisher