

*Dear Co-Chairs Helm and Owens and Members of the Committee,*

*I oppose House Bill 4105.*

I can totally understand the desire of counties to know how much revenue to rely on in this terrible budget time, but it is not easy to predict the amount of logging that can sustainably be done in our forests, and the plans determining sustainability are still being written. Likewise, we should not be litigating over it. This bill represents only the interests of the dollar value of the logging and not the dollar value of water production and quality, stream temperatures, habitat preservation, tourism and carbon storage.

The greatest area of state forest by acreage are in Tillamook, Clatsop and Washington Counties, in both the Clatsop and Tillamook Forests. Both have been overharvested and the new plan does not completely protect the old growth areas that exist in parts of the “legally loggable areas”. There are newly protected areas in the Habitat Conservation plan but many of these are just regrowth from recent logging. The goal according to the Habitat Conservation Plan is to have sustainable older and old growth forests in 30% of the state forest, but until that has been achieved in the protected areas, additional protections of the current old growth needs to occur. These areas provide the best protection for our water systems! Forests filter the water, while clearcuts provide muddy water and landslides and newly growing plantations reduce the summer water volume.

One third of the Santiam Forest has been damaged by fire. The total Area of this forest in Marion, Clackamas and Linn Counties is only 47,000 acres. This fact outlines the difficulty in determining sustainable logging volumes should a similar fire occur in the other state forests.

Managing the state forests is supposed to be done with the value of protecting the Greatest Permanent Value. The value of clean air, water and soil is not monetized here. The salmon industry has been devastated by inadequate protection of our great salmon runs along the coastal rivers. Lastly, the value of carbon storage in our coastal forests, which is equal or better than the tropical rain forest, is not even mentioned.

This bill is not as easily implemented as one might think until you know what is happening on the ground. It especially applies to Tillamook, Washington and Clatsop Counties. We should be advocating for not exempting large corporations from lengthy property tax exemptions instead for county revenue.

Please don't move this bill forward. It will incur a fiscal that we also cannot afford.

Catherine Thomasson, MD

MCAT and veteran hiker in our state forests