

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

Chair Helm, Vice-Chairs, and Members of the House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony regarding House Bill 4105.

My name is Janice Reid, and I am submitting testimony in my capacity as Conservation Chair for Umpqua Watersheds, a conservation organization based in southwest Oregon dedicated to the protection and restoration of native forests, clean water, and wildlife habitat on public lands.

House Bill 4105 directs the State Forester to determine available state forestland, establish sustainable timber harvest levels, and manage state forestland to achieve those harvest levels. The bill also allows certain parties to seek a court order if the State Forester fails to establish or implement sustainable harvest levels.

We appreciate the Legislature's interest in providing clarity and stability in state forest management. However, we respectfully urge careful consideration of the broader policy, ecological, and legal implications of this proposal.

Oregon state forests are managed for multiple public purposes, including timber production, drinking water protection, fish and wildlife habitat, recreation, and climate resilience. Current state forest management frameworks reflect this multi-resource mandate. By centering statutory requirements on establishing and maintaining timber harvest levels, HB 4105 may unintentionally elevate timber production certainty above other statutory forest values.

The bill's structure also raises questions about adaptive management. State forests are increasingly affected by wildfire, drought, insect outbreaks, and climate-driven mortality. A statutory requirement to maintain harvest levels over extended planning periods may reduce the State Forester's flexibility to respond to rapidly changing forest conditions and emerging scientific information.

HB 4105 also intersects with ongoing implementation of state forest Habitat Conservation Plans (HCPs) and related federal Endangered Species Act requirements. Any statutory framework that pressures harvest outcomes prior to full federal review and approval could create legal and biological risk, particularly if federal agencies require modifications to conservation strategies or harvest levels.

Additionally, the bill creates a new litigation pathway allowing certain parties to seek court orders if sustainable harvest levels are not established or achieved. While accountability is important, this provision appears to create enforceable mechanisms tied specifically to timber harvest outcomes, without equivalent enforceable standards for water quality, wildlife habitat, or carbon storage. This may create imbalance in how state forest management decisions are evaluated and challenged.

We also encourage consideration of fiscal implications. Establishing harvest levels by rule and defending potential litigation could increase administrative and legal costs for the state at a time when public resources are already stretched.

Oregon has made substantial progress toward integrated state forest management that supports local economies while protecting drinking water, fish and wildlife habitat, and long-term forest resilience. We encourage the Legislature to ensure any statutory changes preserve the State Forester's ability to balance these values and adapt management to changing environmental and economic conditions.

Thank you for your time and consideration of these comments.

Sincerely,

Janice Reid
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