

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

Dear Honorable Members of the Committee,

Oregon's state forests are the crown jewels of our natural heritage. They provide clean drinking water for our cities, sanctuary for iconic wildlife, and the backdrop for a multi-billion-dollar outdoor recreation economy. While the goal of providing financial predictability for rural counties and the Common School Fund is a noble one, HB 4105 is a fundamentally flawed mechanism that threatens to dismantle decades of progress in balanced forest management. By codifying rigid timber harvest mandates and opening the door to predatory litigation, this bill prioritizes short-term extraction over the long-term survival of our public lands.

I urge you to vote NO on HB 4105 for the following critical reasons:

1. The Fallacy of "Sustainability" Through Mandated Quotas

HB 4105 defines "sustainability" as a fixed volume of timber extracted over a ten-year period. In biological terms, this is a dangerous miscalculation. True sustainability is the ability of an ecosystem to maintain its health and biodiversity over time. Section 1(5) of this bill, which requires "catching up" on unharvested timber from previous years, is particularly reckless. It treats the forest like a warehouse of static inventory rather than a living ecosystem. If a harvest is delayed due to environmental stressors—such as historic wildfires, severe droughts, or heat domes—forcing that volume into a subsequent year creates a "double-down" effect. This leads to over-harvesting, soil compaction, and the degradation of the very land the state is sworn to protect for future generations.

2. Undermining the Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP)

The Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) is working to finalize an HCP that brings our state into compliance with the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA). This plan is a hard-won compromise designed to provide legal certainty for the next 70 years. HB 4105 acts as a "poison pill" for this process. By mandating harvest levels that may conflict with the biological requirements of the Northern Spotted Owl and Marbled Murrelet, the bill puts the state at risk of federal injunctions. If the state is forced to harvest more than federal law allows, Oregonians will foot the bill for the inevitable lawsuits and the potential total shutdown of forest operations.

3. A Dangerous Era of "Management by Litigation"

Section 3 of HB 4105 is an unprecedented overreach that invites any revenue beneficiary to sue the State Forester in Marion County Circuit Court. This creates a

"litigation trigger" that will paralyze ODF. Instead of foresters making decisions based on silviculture and watershed health, they will be forced to prioritize harvest volumes to avoid lawsuits. This bill effectively transfers the management of our public forests from trained scientists to judges. We should be investing in wildfire mitigation, not in state-funded legal battles.

4. Ignoring Climate Reality

Oregon's forests are our most effective tool for carbon sequestration. HB 4105 ignores the modern economic reality that a standing forest provides immense value through carbon storage and stable municipal water supplies. To double down on a 19th-century extraction model while we face 21st-century climate threats is to ignore the reality of our changing world.

The "Greatest Permanent Value" of our state forests is not found in a single timber check, but in the enduring health of the landscape. HB 4105 sacrifices our watersheds for an unattainable and legally risky quota system. I respectfully request that you vote NO on HB 4105.

Sincerely,
Paul Ouellette
Klamath Falls, Oregon