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Even if this were a good bill, there is no funding for it. Oregon is presently at the bottom of the list when compared nationally for funding of public education. Our funding for public safety is also unusually low, which results in above average auto insurance premiums. There is no evidence that more legislation is needed for the wild mushroom industry. Laws have been in force since the early 90s requiring pickers to have site specific permits. Additional regulation through the county boards of health mean there is now a paper trail for wild mushrooms sold to all Oregon restaurants.

Revenue for nearly all aspects of state governance is already inadequate. This bill provides no clear method of assuring that it will be revenue positive. This bill does include recreational pickers, who are currently very poorly served by the existing law. The proposed amendment would only make recreational mushroom harvest more difficult.

The largest single group of mushroom pickers in the state of Oregon is recreational pickers. It is a fast growing demographic that includes tens of thousands of residents and a growing number of tourists. A typical mushroom foray requires a one hour drive each way from the participants' home. Any type of permit would presumably cost money to pay for its administrative costs. Presuming a round trip of 100 miles or more, the average recreational foray will cost a car load of pickers \$50. Any permit system for recreational picking that actually paid for itself would be far too expensive for the typical family.

The most similar recreational activity to mushroom picking is hunting and fishing. There is a crucial difference.

Fish and game are organisms that reproduce. When they are harvested it becomes impossible for them to ever reproduce again. Over-harvesting is always a problem. The ODF&W exists to make sure that won't happen. It does an excellent job. That's why we have hunting and fishing licenses. They pay for the ODF&W.

It is impossible to over harvest mushrooms. Lorelei Norvel spent ten years researching the subject in a doctoral dissertation. She referred to the concept of over harvesting mushrooms as ludicrous. Mushrooms are merely the fruit of the organism. If anything their removal encourages more mushrooms to grow. As long as the forest remains healthy, more mushrooms will be present later the same season and in subsequent seasons.

Fish and game laws are almost entirely enforced in this state by the state police. Whenever they are diverted to enforce mushroom laws wildlife is the primary loser. Future mushroom harvests are dependent on future forests. Best chanterelle harvest occurs under rotational age stands of Douglas-fir. Nearly all these stands have been clearcut in the past three decades, thereby greatly reducing chanterelle harvests in Oregon and Washington alike. Foreign pathogens such as Swiss needle cast and sudden oak death are serious threats to the future of many commercial species of mushrooms in Oregon. This bill does nothing to address those issues.

The rotational age of timber has fallen from seventy to forty years over the past three decades. Few mills will accept a log with a butt diameter over 32". This means that very few timber stands in the future will produce chanterelles, and as soon as they do begin to generate a harvest they will be clearcut again. Some major mushroom harvests occur in very rural areas. The presence of thousands of commercial pickers for many weeks in a row puts huge amounts of cash into these communities. Every effort should be made to encourage the wild mushroom harvest be it recreational or commercial. The only impact of the current legislation is to do harm.

The current system of permits is already burdensome. Additional fees will reduce participation at the same time that it drains already inadequate public resources. All species of mushrooms harvested commercially in Oregon are also harvested in many other countries. The primary market for our wild mushrooms is nw Europe, while matsutake go to Japan. All the other global harvest areas

have cheaper labor costs, and are typically closer to the end market. Oregon has been able to compete because of excellent infrastructure and a unique climate.

Our forest roads are the best in the world. They permit efficient harvest and rapid delivery. Our quality is the best, period. Our mild climate means a long harvest and often a harvest at a time when competing regions are out of production. By accepting the status quo, our legislature is giving a passive boost to a declining industry. It is important to emphasize that the commercial industry has been in decline for at least two solid decades. Although the potential harvest has been greatly reduced, forestgate prices to pickers remains the same in absolute prices. Obviously the costs of production have gone up, the cost of living has gone up. Today's pickers are earning less while spending more.

The proposal to require dealers to buy permits is an equally bad idea. This was tried in Washington State in the early 90s, with a sunset provision to the law. The law was not renewed. The number of active dealers, be they field buyers or distributors, is small. Only a few dozen to a few score run the whole industry. Most of them are operating in large municipalities such as Portland, Eugene, and Klamath Falls. Their activities go on unknown to the State Police and Sheriffs that traditionally enforce special forest product laws. Any increase in regulation will favor these urban dealers over more high-profile rural dealers. The result will also be reduced revenue to the rural areas where harvest occurs. Most buying occurs very close to the state line in Portland, Klamath Falls, and Brookings. If regulation in Oregon becomes onerous many dealers will move across state lines, which to some extent has already happened. The fees assessed on mushroom dealers will not generate meaningful revenue because there are so few. If the fees were high enough to generate useful revenue, all the players would go out of business.

Recreational picking promises to fill some of the gap in rural economies made by the declining commercial industry. The current law, based on firewood is terrible. Celebrity chef Jacques Pépin immediately recognized the flaw in the law when we discussed it six years ago. Mushrooms are highly perishable, while firewood is a durable good. Mushrooms not picked today are compost tomorrow, while firewood cut today is seasoned and more valuable next year.

Neither the fish and game model nor the special forest products' model is appropriate for regulating mushroom harvest in Oregon. A fair and rational system that would insure sustained commercial and recreational harvests needs a completely new law. The current definition of non-commercial harvest as "one gallon per person" is absurd. SB 578 should be abandoned immediately. After substantial research a free standing wild mushroom bill may be appropriate in a future legislative session. At the moment real problems should receive priority. There are no problems with the commercial harvest at the moment. The incredibly vague language of the current bill guarantees that if passed, it will create problems that did not previously exist.