



OREGON WILD

Protecting Oregon's wildlands, wildlife, and waters since 1974.

To: Members of the Senate Rural Communities and Economic Development Committee
From: Chandra LeGue, Oregon Wild
Date: February 10, 2014
RE: Senate Joint Memorial 201

Chair Roblan and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the more than 13,000 members and supporters of Oregon Wild, I would like to offer the following written testimony on SJM 201. In short, while we agree that a solution to the funding crisis facing many Oregon counties is needed, we do not believe this memorial is the way to do it and we must oppose it.

Oregon Wild objects to some of the misleading and inaccurate information in the "whereas" clauses in the measure, as detailed in the memo issued with the Sierra Club and provided with our written testimony. For instance, we take issue with the characterization that timber harvest has declined by 90%, when this figure is based on the all-time high and unsustainable logging levels of the late 1980s that led to endangered species listings and public outcry. It is also misleading to link federal logging declines to the current county funding crisis, when most counties have done little to modernize tax structures to prepare for the end of transition payments from the federal government.

Oregon Wild recognizes the gravity of the county funding situation and we are happy to be a part of finding a solution at the state and county, in addition to federal, levels. But we strongly believe that a county funding solution cannot come at the expense of sacrificing lands that belong to all Oregonians. Unfortunately, the thrust of the current proposals being considered in Congress – including Senator Wyden's O&C Land Grant Act that Oregon Wild testified against in the Senate Energy & Natural Resources Committee hearing last week – do just that. These proposals simply can not provide stable county revenues, at the level counties have come to expect from the federal government, without violating environmental laws and sacrificing clean water, wildlife habitat, and other public values.

Oregon Wild has opposed similar Memorials that sought to increase logging on federal public lands in past sessions for similar reasons. We feel this, and past similar measures, are misguided, unnecessary, and, ultimately, not the purview of the State legislature. Given the controversial nature of these federal proposals, and President Obama's threat to veto the House measure H.R. 1526 supported by Congressmen DeFazio, Schrader, and Walden, we urge the Committee to take a cautious approach and not rush to pass an inaccurate statement supporting such efforts.

While we urge the Committee to oppose this measure, we would like to offer an alternative model to explore. I invite the Committee members to join Oregon Wild on a tour of the Siuslaw National Forest, where collaboration between our group, timber mills and contractors, watershed councils, local landowners, and local governments have been working on watershed and forest restoration that consistently meets or exceeds timber targets, provides jobs, helps recover threatened species, and has removed controversy.

Attachments: Siuslaw Stewardship Brochure, oral testimony to U.S. Senate Energy & Natural Resources Committee, and memo on SJM 201 from Oregon Wild and Sierra Club.