

Legislative testimony re: Senate Bill 1575

Dear Chair Roblan and members of the committee:

I have worked in an academic position serving the forest products industry in Oregon since 1994. My primary job duties are providing technical assistance to forest products manufacturing firms. I mention my current employment as context for these statements and want to be clear that this is my personal testimony and in no way is intended to represent the official position of my employer, Oregon State University. My education is in wood science & technology (B.S.), forest products (M.S.), and engineering management (Ph.D.). My Ph.D. program was at Portland State University and focused on innovation management in the forest industry.

Further, I have no business relationship with Mark Fritch of Fritch Log Homes. My interactions with Mr. Fritch in the past have been limited to sending a graduate student to interview him with regards to innovation practices in the forest industry and with respect to the issue at-hand here – definitions of primary forest products processing. Mr. Fritch contacted me in 2013 to ask what the technical definition was for a primary forest products processing facility. Without knowing the context for the question, I cited the following simple answer, “if a facility has a log yard, they are a primary manufacturer.” This is essentially what I have learned in my experience – primary forest products producers begin with logs and create semi-finished products. Secondary forest products manufacturers purchase the products of primary firms (e.g., lumber and plywood) to produce products such as furniture, cabinets, moulding, doors, windows, etc.

When Mr. Fritch asked me for an official definition of primary forest products manufacturing, I was surprised that I was unable to find anything in the wide variety of sources I have at my disposal. In fact, the only published source I could find was a US Forest Service Publication titled “Oregon’s Forest Products Industry and Timber Harvest, 2008: Industry Trends and Impacts of the Great Recession Through 2010.” This publication, as well as the prior edition (published in 2006) provides a comprehensive definition of primary forest products as follows “This report addresses ‘primary forest products,’ i.e., wood products directly manufactured from timber. These include lumber, plywood, veneer, posts and poles, pilings and timbers, and cedar shakes and shingles as well as products made from chipping or grinding timber, and from the mill residue (e.g., bark, sawdust, and planer shavings) generated during production of primary forest products.”

I support SB 1575 because I believe Oregon needs to clearly define what is meant by primary forest products processing to ensure consistency throughout the State in making decisions related to land use planning and economic development. State and county laws already contain sections specifically defining terms used within the language of the law. However I am surprised that we have been able to go this many years as a state without having to define one of the most fundamental terms related to the forest industry.

Please don’t hesitate to contact me if I can be of assistance.

Sincerely,

Scott Leavengood, Ph.D.
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