



# Crook County

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February 12, 2014

**VIA EMAIL TO [beth.patрино@state.or.us](mailto:beth.patрино@state.or.us)**

Oregon Senate Committee on Rural Communities and Economic Development  
Attn: Beth Patrino, Committee Administrator

Re: *Hearing Testimony for SB 1578*

Dear Sir or Madam:

This letter is written to express the Crook County Court's support for SB 1578, as amended, to make biomass an eligible green energy technology to meet the State's 1.5 percent investment requirement for new public buildings and major renovations.

From a public policy perspective, the Crook County Court believes that several factors support biomass production as an effective renewable energy alternative, including promoting forest health, improving the economic vitality of our rural community, and reducing the risk of catastrophic wildfire. According to Paul Barnum, the executive director for the Oregon Forest Resources Institute (OFRI), considerable amounts of forest land could benefit from additional thinning. Regarding forest health, Barnum pointed out that there are millions of acres of overstocked, insect-prone forests in Central and Eastern Oregon (including Crook County) that are in need of some kind of treatment to prevent catastrophic wildfire.

The Oregon University System, working in partnership with the Oregon Economic and Community Development Department, recently commissioned a bio-fuels industry readiness survey for Oregon. That study concluded that Central Oregon appears to hold the best potential for western juniper utilization, with the greatest concentrations of juniper in the state located in Crook County. This abundant resource (2.9 million Bone Dry Tons) together with the passage of SB 1578 could play a key role in reviving Crook County's struggling economy.

Having biomass as a renewable energy alternative is critical to providing diverse economic opportunities in Crook County. A recent study of over 20 community-scale biomass thermal energy projects scattered across 10 Oregon counties included such uses as providing space heat and hot water to schools, hospitals, airports, and visitor centers in small communities such as Burns, Enterprise, Days Creek, Estacada, Oakridge, Tillamook, John Day, Three Rivers, Sisters, Prairie City, Vernonia, and Bend. These 20 plus projects demonstrate the potential of biomass thermal energy as a positive economic stimulus to Oregon counties. However, exclusion of woody biomass from the eligible 1.5 percent green energy

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technologies will stymie wide spread adoption of biomass thermal energy projects as a potential alternative.

Please join Crook County in supporting passage of Senate Bill 1578.

Sincerely,



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Mike McGane, Crook County Judge



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Ken Fahlgren, County Commissioner



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Seth Crawford, County Commissioner