



Oregon

John A. Kitzhaber, MD, Governor

Department of Forestry

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"STEWARDSHIP IN FORESTRY"

February 5, 2015

Representative Brad Witt, Chair
House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee
Room 347, State Capitol
Salem, Oregon 97301

RE: HB 2453 – Relating to Commercial Events on State Forests

Dear Chair Witt and members of the committee:

The Department of Forestry appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill 2453.

Large, unpermitted, commercial social events, such as overnight “rave” parties drawing hundreds of people and vehicles, have raised serious public safety, law enforcement, fire danger and resource damage concerns in state forests, particularly the Clatsop and Tillamook. This bill would make conducting large, commercial events on state forests without proper permitting a Class A misdemeanor.

While most rave parties are single-night events, some are marketed as two- or three-day music festivals. It’s not unusual for these events to draw 300 to 800 people and several hundred vehicles. The Tillamook County Sheriff’s Office reports responding to several such events on state forests each year. The Clatsop County Sheriff reports an increase in these events in the past five years.

Authorities report problems including illegal drug use, other criminal activity, a high likelihood of sexual assault, sanitation concerns, unsafe or intoxicated driving that has caused injuries, dangerous use of fire with high risk of wildfire, extensive garbage dumping, road and resource damage and vandalism. Some specific incidents include:

- Nineteen raves on the Tillamook and Clatsop State Forests in 2014. Several more were shut down prior to starting through law enforcement patrols and intelligence-gathering.
- Risk of serious injury or death associated with violent, riotous, and irresponsible activity.
- Fires outside of designated campgrounds at a gathering in the summer of 2013.
- At least five reported rave parties in the Tillamook State Forest in May and June of 2013 requiring joint responses from Tillamook, Clatsop, Columbia and Washington County authorities.
- Unsafe and illegal activities held far from law enforcement resources impacting the ability to respond and decreasing the likelihood of detection and intervention.
- Damage to State Forest lands including littering, road damage and poor sanitation.

Public safety agencies and the Department of Forestry lack the resources to address these issues. Tillamook County and Clatsop County Sheriff Offices are both supportive of this bill, having experienced significant

challenges associated with these activities as well as tragic vehicle accidents as participants have left these events. The promoters often communicate about upcoming events such that law enforcement cannot monitor their activities. The problems are further complicated due to safety issues that officers face when approaching an event with 400-800 participants. These events are almost impossible to shut down— at times requiring Tillamook, Clatsop, Columbia, and Washington Counties to join forces to gain control or stop the events.

Most of these events are held outside of current state forest permitting processes, which can provide a variety of requirements and safeguards. Organizers can collect tens of thousands of dollars in revenue from the events and under current authority, may pay violations of \$500 or less.

With adoption of this bill, a permit will be required, issued by the Department of Forestry, for events with 20 or more participants or 15 or more vehicles, lasting for more than three hours. Under the proposed bill, these activities —without a permit or other agreement—would be a class A misdemeanor. This class carries maximums of one year in prison and a \$6,250 fine. Alternatively, a court may require a defendant to pay an amount not exceeding double any gain in money or property. Regulating these activities will allow law enforcement to make arrests and will provide a disincentive to event organizers, reducing the frequency of raves as well as the unsafe and unsanitary conditions associated with such activities on state forest lands. Law enforcement officers will also gain the ability to seize audio and lighting equipment, which will not only stop the activity but will help to prevent the organizers from conducting the event elsewhere. Issuing permits for these activities will alert the state and law enforcement, creating the ability to monitor and plan accordingly.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. We would be happy to answer any questions.

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