



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
900 COURT ST NE
SALEM, OR 97301

HB 3444

Chair Clem and distinguished members of the Committee on Rural Communities, Land Use & Water thank you for taking the time to hear HB 3444 today.

For the record, my name is Rep. Jim Weidner and my district covers most of Yamhill County and Southwest Washington County.

HB 3444 is related to the transfer of federal lands over to the state of Oregon. I introduced this bill as a means of starting the conversation about the proper management of our forests. The western states have a disproportionate amount of their forest lands owned by the federal government. In Oregon, the federal government owns 52.3% of our forest lands which is over 32 million acres. The problem is that these lands are largely left to their natural state and the trees have grown too thick for meadows which have reduced the amount of food available for elk and deer resulting in diminished numbers. The Congressional budget reductions have significantly diminished the capacity of the federal land management agencies to fulfill their responsibilities.

Furthermore, we need to provide salvage logging opportunities so downed trees can be removed and harvested if possible for timber, thus removing the rotting tree which sits emitting Co2 as well as becoming tinder for wildfires. Today, 40% of Oregon forestland is Class 3 or at high-risk for catastrophic wild fire. In 2013, the state of Oregon had to pay an extra \$40 million for fire suppression.

In contrast, Oregon State Forest Management has resulted in over \$46 million annually in revenue to Forest Trust Land Counties. In addition, management of private forestlands under the Oregon Forest Practices Act has resulted in a sustainably harvested range of 2.5 billion board feet annually from the 34% of the forest landscape. Contrast that with the forest under federal management which resulted in only 400 million board feet from 60% of the forest landscape.

I along with other western state legislators seek to begin the conversation about the legal, economic, social and practical benefits and the risks associated with the transfer of federal lands back to the state.

Thank you for taking the time to hear this bill today.