



**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
OF OREGON**

The League of Women Voters of Oregon is a 97-year-old grassroots nonpartisan political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government. We envision informed Oregonians participating in a fully accessible, responsive, and transparent government to achieve the common good. LWVOR Legislative Action is based on advocacy positions formed through studies and member consensus. The League never supports or opposes any candidate or political party.

March 18, 2017

To: Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
Senator Michael Dembrow, Chair

Re: Senate Bill 847 – Trust Land Transfer Program and Fund – **Support**

The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that natural resources such as forests and the animals and plants living within them should be managed as interrelated parts of life-supporting ecosystems. Resources should be conserved and protected to assure their future availability, including the 82,500 acres of the Elliott State Forest. We particularly note the importance of the over 40,000 acres of forestlands on the Elliott that have never been logged. These native rainforests provide critical habitat for a host of species teetering on the brink of extinction, like the marbled murrelet and northern spotted owl. We need to preserve the physical, chemical and biological integrity of ecosystems and to protect public health. With any final outcome by the trust lands transfer process, government protections should be upheld.

In part, because of our recent water studies (“Coastal and Nearshore Oregon: Using and Protecting Our Natural Resources”, and “Water In Oregon-Not a Drop to Waste” both by the LWV of Oregon Education Fund), we favor careful landscape management to insure protection of rivers and streams as well as the endangered salmon and other fish in our public lands.

Fisheries experts have determined that streams originating in the Elliott, for instance, support nearly 25% of the wild coho salmon productivity in Oregon. This underscores the need to safeguard the Elliott, which in turn protects the water quality critical to Coho survival and persistence. Streams flowing from the Elliott also provide drinking water for Oregon’s coastal populations. Protecting and preserving natural, scenic, cultural, historic, and wildlife sites is an appropriate use of places such as the Elliott. We know that a large portion of the Elliott has a variety of public benefits that should be preserved. This bill will allow that preservation.

We have reviewed Senate Bill 847, which creates a process for a Trust Lands Transfer Program and creates a Fund to accept monies to pay for such transfers. The bill creates a process for the State Land Board, Department of State Lands and Legislative Assembly to coordinate transfer of certain trust lands managed for the benefit of the Common School Fund that have limited performance potential as assets of the Common School Fund to certain other public bodies better positioned to manage lands for benefit of the public. **We support SB 847 because we believe it will help the State Land Board to move forward in decoupling the Elliott State Forest from the Common School Fund and keeping the Elliott State Forest public. Our public lands are an irreplaceable resource and should be kept public for the enjoyment of future generations.** Other states have used this method when public lands are threatened in order to preserve them for future generations. LWVOR acknowledges that the Elliott disposition is a very difficult issue because of an outdated arrangement that couples a

pristine forest ecosystem to school funding. Our schools and protection of our forests are both important and one should not have to be chosen at the expense of the other. This bill allows for a solution that keeps the Elliott Forest public and decouples it from the Common School Fund.

A trust land transfer option can protect the Elliott's remaining native forests, including the old growth forests that are disappearing from our landscape, can protect the wild salmon and imperiled wildlife, safeguards the Elliott for public recreational and educational opportunities and can promote timber jobs by restoratively thinning the second-growth tree farms. This bill can help stop the privatization of the Elliott State Forest. But, to be clear, this bill is about more than the Elliott. **A Trust Land Transfer program is a good long-term solution to protect future threatened Common School Fund lands.**

In conclusion, the Elliott State Forest has become an Oregon icon as something other than an "investment" that is meant to earn an income, if only for the endangered species that use the forest (the marbled murrelet, the spotted owl and the salmon). As such, **the League supports SB 847** as part of a plan to decouple the school funding from the Elliott State Forest and keep the Elliott State Forest as a public treasure for future generations.

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss this legislation.



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cc: Jason Miner, Governor's Natural Resources Policy Director (Jason.Miner@oregon.gov)