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Oregon Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

Statement in Opposition to SB 500 and SB 892.

Greetings. I am David Rankin. My wife and I own 184 acres of forest land in western Lane County approximately 2 miles southeast of Florence along the South Inlet of the Siuslaw River. We have owned and managed this property since 1973. Our efforts early on were to let things grow. In 2014 we completed a 20 acre harvest. This operation contributed 143 loads of forest products to five separate mills and also to export from the Port of Coos Bay.

The area harvested has now been replanted with 6000 Douglas Fir seedlings and 1000 Western Red Cedar. Prior to replanting the area was treated via back pack sprayers to control emergent vegetation which would compete with seedlings and restrict their ability to become "free to grow."

We have another harvest of 34 acres in the planning stages. This operation will occur on coastal land form necessitating a yarder based clear-cut harvest. The area involved is adjacent to the previous unit. The proposed harvest unit is suitable for an aerial application of products aimed at site preparation and release of seedlings from competitive species and brush. It is impossible to grow a new forest on the coast range without using herbicides to control brush. Planning for an aerial application necessitates specific selection of target dates. It is all dependent on aircraft availability and weather. The many additional timing requirements, to use aerial application, as proposed in Senate Bill 892, would preclude an orderly operation to occur should weather conditions eliminate a date selected for application and the availability of equipment to spray the herbicides because everyone else who is trying to apply herbicides is having the same problem. We oppose Senate Bill 892.

We considered aerial application of herbicide on our 20 acre harvest. Size and proximity to South Inlet, three streams, a small lake, a 120 foot wide riparian management zone where no trees were harvested and constricted flight clearance led us to choose a manual application of herbicide. The replant went well and seedlings are coming along nicely. As we speak, a Notice of Operation has been filed with the Oregon Department of Forestry for an application of herbicide in this same area to control Scotch Broom. Control of this insidious forest invasive species will be a manually applied basal spray. We oppose Senate Bill 500. Our conflict is the open-ended period of time proposed for a notice of damage to occur long after there is adequate time to do a fair investigation. The 60 day requirement in current law is more than adequate.

We strive to responsibly follow the Forest Practices Act and specific rules aimed toward various forest operations. We believe all owners of forest land abide by these rules and oppose open-ended time frames to claim loss, and further regulation of herbicide application.

I urge the Committee to recommend a "No Pass" designation for these two bills. Tree farmers and foresters need the available tools in the tool box to keep forests growing in a timely and beneficial manner. Responsible management of invasive species and competing vegetation via herbicide application is one of the tools.