

Senate Bill 892

Testimony of Dr. Michael Newton, Manager, Newton Family Forest, LLC

Before the Oregon Senate Committee on March 22, 2017

When I was an OSU Instructor doing research on forest herbicides in 1960, I learned the value of aerial application to protect planted trees.

In 1961, my wife and I bought 200 acres of brush-occupied forestland in Lincoln County. It had only scattered trees, no conifer forest. Our goal was to grow timber as a family. We promptly began planting.

Our son, 10, and daughter 9, and I, were the main planters in the beginning. Under a permit, we gathered seedlings from miles of Forest Service roadsides. In the next 7 years, we planted some 40,000 trees through overwhelming brush, much of it hardwood trees 20-80 feet tall, impossible to hand cut. The seedlings require sun! We wanted them to survive, so we hired helicopters to spray, averaging three times for each area planted, about 400 acres total.

We learned immediately that we had to reserve helicopters many weeks ahead to allow scheduling among their main farm and forest clients.

From a beginning with no conifer timber, our tree farm has turned into a tremendous conifer forest. All this was the result of two activities: 1. Planting big seedlings, and 2. Reducing the competitive brush and hardwoods. The brush and hardwood remained, mostly stunted, but the added light in the forest triggered tremendous deer and elk forage, habitat for mice, rabbits, and mountain beavers. And wonderful growth of the conifers seedlings.

We have harvested over three million board feet of fine timber already from these planted trees, the yield of which established an endowment for forest ecology research at OSU. Following these harvests, this much again remains, along with over 100 acres of younger stands.

We could not have cut the brush. If we had, we would have failed to meet ODF's reforestation rules, and also faced the daunting probability of accidents, the nature of which Oregon's Industrial Accident Program has calculated to be about a thousand times that associated with aerial spraying. Hand cutting would have required many years of dangerous labor that would have interfered with my research at OSU.

The FERN system of notification developed by ODF gives formal notice of intent to spray as part of each year's plans. ODF and the public are notified early in the year that spraying will occur at a certain place. ODF also has rules that wind must be very low to avoid drift of spray off target areas. Neighbors are notified to expect aircraft flying low to spray. We were always careful to explain why we were spraying and how we planned to do it.

These observations indicate that the proposed Senate Bill 892 would be very impractical, costly, risky, and totally unnecessary.