

March 17, 2017

Re: Support for HB 2669 Oregon Forest Practice Act Reform

As a land owner on the North Oregon Coast who has lived in the upper watershed of the Nehalem River Valley for 30 years, I have witnessed the impact of severe logging practices on the forests and the waterways. I have seen forest land disappear into clear cut all around me; rich topsoil destroyed by toxic spray and the compression of heavy machinery; rivers and streams running brown with silt; whole towns, such as Rockaway, receiving notice of unsafe drinking water; and, of course, erosion, mudslides, and flooding. All of this is a reality to those who live on the North Oregon Coast.

Many of us who live here have worked with Watershed Councils and Land Trusts over the years in an attempt to restore our watersheds from damage mostly created by current logging practices of the timber industry and supported by a very weak Forest Practices Act, which offers less protection for forests and streams than any of our neighbor states. Oregon used to be a leader in environmental protection, proud of its forests and rivers; now it is a state known to be controlled by the timber industry and offering expansive views of clear cut hillsides.

In addition to the proof of degradation we see and experience living in these Coastal areas, last year Oregon was the first state ever to be denied federal grant money for failure to meet EPA standards for clean water in our coastal streams. The negative impact of current logging practices on the watersheds was also verified by the recently released 2015 DEQ report, suppressed earlier by ODF and the timber industry. A shocking example of weak regulation occurred last summer when Weyerhaeuser Timber was legally allowed to spray over the headwaters of a stream 1/3 mile from Oswald State Park. In spite of public requests, no prior warning was given, even though the stream flows through the Park and children and animals enjoy its waters. People stood in the parking lot with signs; people wrote letters of protest to the State and to Weyerhaeuser. But this still happened.

I am particularly concerned about the increasing failure of the State to recognize the value of older native forests and the recent trend to sell them to the timber industry for immediate profit, resulting in more clear cut-- managed with a weak Forest Practices Act. Recent examples are the clear cutting of the complex, older growth Homesteader Forest along the Nehalem River—in spite of 2,000 people who wrote of its value; the Linn County Law Suit; and the proposed sale of the Elliott State Forest.

We have the science now to understand the importance of these older forests-- to filter the water, hold the earth, cool the streams and earth, store carbon—and serve as a seed bed and home to myriad species. The Oregon Forest Practices Act should not simply give guidelines for clear cutting the forest, but should also have guidelines for keeping these older forests as viable ecosystems and the natural heritage of Oregon. I would be proud if Oregon could once again be a leader in Forest Protection instead of giving more and more of its forest lands for quick revenue. I hope you will support the badly needed revisions to the State Forest Practices Act.

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