



March 29, 2017

Testimony in support of HB 3226
House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee

On behalf of 20,000 members here in Oregon, I'd like to express Sierra Club's strong support for House Bill 3226.

This bill represents an opportunity to bring Oregon's private timberland practices and into the 21st century and in alignment with our neighboring states, Washington and California, by closing serious loopholes that currently allow timber companies to degrade our economically and culturally important salmon rivers, pollute our air and drinking water, and expose thousands of Oregonians to cancer-causing chemicals.

First and foremost - areal spraying of toxic chemicals infringes upon the rights of Oregonians who recreate, own, or live near or adjacent to private timberlands. It is a well documented fact that chemicals sprayed aerially from helicopters inevitably drift beyond the land they were sprayed upon - unavoidably exposing anyone who happens to be nearby - whether they're hiking with their families or enjoying a cup of coffee in their living room. There is no way for Oregonians to avoid exposure without evacuating their communities entirely or closing our state forests to recreation during spraying.

What's more - these are not benign chemicals. By allowing this rights-violating practice - we also knowingly permit agricultural businesses to directly expose thousands of Oregonians to a cocktail of toxic cancer-causing chemicals that have a wide range of serious and life-threatening health consequences - both through the air they breathe and water they drink.

I'm sure you would agree that it is unacceptable and unconscionable to allow these practices to continue given these health consequences alone. No business should be granted the right by the State Legislature to knowingly poison Oregonians. They don't allow timber companies to do this in California or Washington, why should we?

Current OFPA have also had far-reaching impacts on Oregon's salmon runs. Once teaming with salmon, antiquated logging practices permitted under OFPA have degraded Oregon's rivers and streams, reducing the once expansive range of these fish and dwindling their numbers to a mere fraction of their historic abundance. Coastal Coho and Winter Steelhead have been listed under the Endangered Species Act along with many other fish and wildlife in no small part due to our laissez faire forest practices.

Other great OFPA flaws remedied by this bill -the practice of clear-cutting almost to the very edge of our rivers and streams and clear-cutting on steep slopes. Referred to as "buffers," the strip of forested land bordering rivers and streams is so small on Oregon's private timberlands as to be ecologically nonfunctional and proactively nonexistent - especially when compared to those the much larger buffers required by law in Washington and California. Allowing timber companies to harvest trees in this way demonstrates a complete lack of respect for both science and our economically and culturally vital salmon runs.

On steep slopes and along a massive network of roads built to access timber, landslides and persistent sediment crushes spawning grounds and cut off critical arteries that allow fish to move between fresh and saltwater, a critical part of their life history. These roads are the number one source of sediment delivery to streams, impacting water quality and fish habitat. The bill would require industrial landowners to inventory their road network, identify problem roads, upgrade or decommission them within a specified time period. It would also require landowners to identify and remove barriers to fish passage.

Without healthy salmon runs Oregon communities, especially on the coast, risk substantial economic losses. Over the past several decades, these communities have been abandoned by the timber industry in favor of shipping once plentiful jobs along with their logs to China and are increasingly

dependent on tourism, recreation, and salmon fishing. According to a recent Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife report, the value of Oregon commercial onshore harvests alone was \$136.2 million, which is down from the 160.2 million in 2014 and the lowest values since 2010. With the threats facing our fisheries as the result of an uncertain climate future, we need healthy habitat, streams and rivers more than ever to whether the warming water temperatures and a reduction in marine-derived nutrients and keep our fisheries-dependent economy afloat.

As the governing body that put the original and flawed Oregon Forest Practices Act into place, knowing how current practices impact our communities, fisheries, rivers and economy – it is now your responsibility to bring OFPA up to date by passing HB 3226. We respectfully request your support for this bill.

Respectfully submitted
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Oregon Chapter of the Sierra Club