



April 12, 2017

Re: Testimony opposing House Joint Memorial (HJM) 11

Chair Clem and Members of House Committee on Agriculture & Natural Resources:

On behalf of the more than 40,000 members and supporters of Oregon Wild and the Oregon Chapter of the Sierra Club, we would like to offer the following written testimony opposing HJM 11. In short, while we agree that a solution to the funding crisis facing many Oregon counties is needed, we believe this Memorial, like past similar measures we have opposed, offers an unproven “solution” of increasing logging on federal public lands that is misguided, unnecessary, and, ultimately, not the purview of the State legislature.

First, we object to some of the misleading and inaccurate information in the “whereas” clauses in the measure, as detailed in the memo attached to this testimony. For instance, we take issue with the characterization that the 1937 O&C Act “mandates” a particular harvest level. It is also misleading to link federal logging declines to the current county funding crisis, when most counties have done little to modernize tax structures to prepare for the end of transition payments from the federal government.

The Memorial seems to take issue, more than anything, with the BLM’s new Resource Management Plans approved in 2016. While our organizations also have issues with the BLM’s RMP, the concerns voiced in the Memorial mirror those argued by the timber industry in their criticism and litigation of the plan. The Memorial seems aimed to sidestep the legal process that is playing out in relation to the RMPs by seeking Congressional or federal Administrative intervention.

Oregon Wild and the Sierra Club recognize the gravity of the county funding situation and we are happy to be a part of finding a solution at the state and county, in addition to federal, levels. But we strongly believe that a county funding solution cannot come at the expense of sacrificing lands that belong to all Oregonians. Unfortunately, the thrust of forest management proposals that have been considered in Congress in recent years do just that. Given the recent bent of Congress and new administration towards further exploitation, and even privatization, of our public lands and resources, we urge the Committee to take a cautious approach and not rush to pass an inaccurate statement supporting efforts by the federal government that are not in the best interest of Oregonians.

While we urge the Committee to oppose this measure, we would like to recognize the efforts of legislators, non-profit organizations, and federal agencies working to find alternative ways for counties to fund essential services, and for effectively managing natural resources in a way that ensures clean water, wildlife habitat, recreational opportunities, and a livable climate for Oregonians. A prime example of this can be found on the Siuslaw National Forest, where collaboration between conservationists, timber mills and contractors, watershed councils, tribes, local landowners, and governments have been working on watershed and forest restoration that consistently meets or exceeds timber targets, provides jobs, helps recover threatened species, and has removed controversy. We would be happy to set up a tour in this area for interested lawmakers.

Respectfully,

Chandra LeGue
Western Oregon Field Coordinator
Oregon Wild
541-344-0675
cl@oregonwild.org

Rhett Lawrence
Conservation Director
Oregon Chapter Sierra Club
503-238-0442, x 304
Rhett.lawrence@sierraclub.org