



“Coming together for healthy forests and communities”

May 19, 2017

TO: Representative Ken Helm, Chairman, House Committee on Energy and the Environment

FROM: Southern Willamette Forest Collaborative

SUBJECT: SB 634

The Southern Willamette Forest Collaborative (SWFC) is writing to express our support for SB 634 relating to using woody biomass as a green energy technology. The development of biomass markets is a key component to increasing the pace, scale, and effectiveness of restoration of Oregon’s federal forests and providing rural communities the opportunity to create jobs.

Forest collaborative groups bring environmentalists, timber industry representatives, local government, state and federal land management agencies, and community members together to find agreement on forest management. Collaboration has led to the development of new projects that meet multiple ecological and economic objectives, and offer solutions to the challenges rural communities face.

Since 2014, SWFC members have worked together to explore biomass utilization opportunities in Oakridge. The SWFC, OSU Wood Science & Engineering Department, City of Oakridge, Willamette National Forest and industry partners joined forces to analyze a phased biomass plant for Oakridge to utilize woody debris from local timber harvests. With a steady supply of timber harvest byproducts and secure markets, Oakridge could be an ideal location for a small multi-product plant.

Removing biomass from forests reduces fuel loading in overstocked timber stands, reduces post harvest slash burning and creates jobs. Last year, the SWFC collaboration committee began working together on stewardship contracts projects on the Willamette National Forest. A diverse group of stakeholders met for learning sessions, fieldtrips and roundtable discussions to recommend a local workforce area and restoration projects for two stewardship projects. The group proposed biomass removal as a contract item to reduce slash burning. The committee hopes to learn from the first stewardship project and determine if the practice can be replicated for the next larger stewardship sale.

Qualifying woody biomass as a green technology in the construction and renovation of public buildings creates markets for this renewable resource, creates jobs and creates additional funding streams for much needed forest restoration. This bill could help expand markets for biomass producers throughout the state, and make a local plant more feasible.

On behalf of the SWFC board of directors and members, thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,



Sarah Altemus-Pope
SWFC Coordinator
J.D., M.S. Conflict Resolution
541.521.5786
director@swfcollaborative.org
southwillamette.wixsite.com/swfc

SWFC Board of Directors

David Chamberlain	Greater Oakridge Area Trail Stewards
Jim Coey	Oakridge Mayor
Darren Cross	Middle Fork Ranger District (Advisory)
Sarah Dyrdaahl	Middle Fork Willamette Watershed Council
Paula Hebert	Oregon Horseman's Association
Loren Hogue	Community member
John Milandin	Oakridge Economic Development Advisory Committee
Kathy Nichols	Oakridge City Council
Susan Obermeyer	Community member
Laurie Patty	Oakridge business owner