



Senate Environment and Natural Resource Committee
senr.exhibits@oregonlegislature.gov

January 15, 2020

Dear Committee:

Bill Harvey
Commission Chair
bharvey@bakercounty.org

The Oregon legislative short sessions were initiated via ballot measure in 2010 to deal with budget issues, not new bills, that arise between the Legislature's longer sessions, which take place in odd-numbered years. That measure also limited the length of each session – 160 days for the long session and 35 days for the short session. In a very few number of years, lawmakers have shifted away from the original intention, and that as a result, legislators push through reckless legislation every other year. The shift has also resulted in transparency being eliminated and bills, like the new "Oregon Greenhouse Gas Initiative" aka Cap and Trade (currently LC19), not being sent to the voters.

The Oregon Constitution gives citizens the right to challenge legislation through comments, public meetings, and referendum, rights that will not happen due to the hastiness of the short session process. The inclusion of this bill in the short session highlights that the supporters of the bill do not want those in opposition to have a chance for Oregonians to voice their opinions or vote on this bill. This bill effects every Oregonian and everyone should have a say.

We live in two different worlds; urbanized western Oregon and rural eastern Oregon. We are different in so many ways – western consumers v. eastern producers, western concrete highways v. eastern open spaces, western mass transit v. eastern long travel distances, large corporate businesses v. small 'mom and pop' entrepreneurs, but most importantly we differ politically. In eastern Oregon, our values encompass personal responsibility, which embraces small government and voting on decisions, traits that western Oregon and the State's leadership have forgotten.

The Oregon Greenhouse Gas Initiative will impact everyone – there are no exceptions. Producers, such as ranchers, farmers, timber workers, and housing contractors, have no "green fuel" alternatives. There are no electric tractors and no "alternative fuel" trucks to transport items in or goods out. There are no alternatives that allow for reduction in fuel consumption or lessen the amount of miles traveled to get eastern produced commodities to the consumers on the other side of the State. Rural and urban consumers will be hit with increased in costs of everything on their grocery store shelves, the electricity, propane, and natural gas to light, heat or cool their homes. Urban consumers will still be subject to CO2 emitting traffic because not everyone can afford, or wants, an electric powered vehicle – there simply is not the technology available even at the urban scale. Trucks and trains will still require diesel to transport goods. The economic impacts of the Oregon Greenhouse Gas Initiative reach across the State and will decimate large corporations as well as small family businesses. All of this economic devastation will be caused by a feel-good bill which will provide "miniscule" benefits according to the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality Director Richard Whitman.

Oregon has always been known for a State that prides itself on the protection of land and the right to farm. This bill undermines and devalues the very history of what made the State a

leader in conservation. Our healthy forests provide a large carbon sink that withdraws 50% of the CO2 that is put into the atmosphere. Unfortunately, the conditions of the forests have deteriorated to a point that raging wildfires decimate hundreds of thousands of acres in a year, releasing CO2 at an alarming rate. Simply, easily, cheaply, and most importantly, this wildfire cycle could be stopped by the restoration of healthy forests. No restricting laws based on 'consensual' science will do more.

Throwing money at wildfire prevention as proposed in LC19 is not the answer. It is the lack, and suppression of, fires that, in part have allowed our forests to become tinder-boxes. In addition, many million acres of forest are managed by federal agencies that would not get benefits from the new taxes. The solution to forest management is simple: allow forest management, cease to let environmental groups stop projects to treat fuel loads, and reduce the regulatory burden for private landowners wishing to conduct forestry projects.

Unintended, but very real consequences will cause businesses to relocate into states that do not have the reduced carbon fuel tax that Oregon has. The carbon impact of this exodus will negate any intended gains, and may actually cause an increase in carbon production. Oregon is not in an atmospheric jar – we share the air of the world. This makes the Oregon Greenhouse Gas Initiative even more of a punishment of Oregonians.

Please, no cut-outs for 'special' businesses or classes of people. This bill already reads like the federal tax manual and, in truth, a statewide bill should affect everyone. If this bill were, in fact, intended to reduce carbon, it would be one-size-fits-all, no exceptions, everyone treated equally bill. The only solution is to reject Oregon Greenhouse Gas Initiative and all of the economic devastation it will create.

Baker County submits this letter to oppose the Oregon Greenhouse Gas Initiative. The County fully intends to continue to oppose this bill at every chance until our voices are heard. This legislation will not only devastate eastern Oregon's economy, but that of the entire State. Unfortunately, eastern Oregon is more vulnerable and losing one job here equals losing 300 jobs on the western side of the State.

Please stop and think about the consequences of Oregon Greenhouse Gas Initiative and reject it.

Sincerely,



Bill Harvey, Chair
Baker County Commission