



February 5, 2019

Via e-mail: haglu.exhibits@oregonlegislature.gov
House Committee on Agriculture and Land Use
900 Court Street NE Salem, OR 97301

RE: HB 2225 (Forest Template Dwellings) Testimony

Dear Chair Clem & Members of the Committee on Agriculture and Land Use

Thrive Hood River (formerly Hood River Valley Residents Committee) is one of Oregon's oldest local land use advocacy groups. Since 1977 our mission has been to protect farms, forests, special wild places and the livability of urban and rural communities in Hood River County. We are writing to comment on HB 2225.

A central organizing principal of our statewide land use system is to protect resource zones for resource uses. HB 2225 offers good commonsense fixes to the Template Dwelling statute which has seen abuse in recent years. The forest template dwelling test has been gamed by creative landowners and their attorneys to allow the development of many more non-forestry related homes than the legislature intended when ORS 215.750 was first enacted.

“A house in the big woods” is terrible public policy in this era of increased wild fire risk. In Hood River County, our forests are still recovering from the Eagle Creek fire and our community is still recovering from the trauma of living under evacuation orders and breathing smoke for weeks. At the height of the Eagle Creek fire, 300 fire fighters from Oregon and Washington were deployed. Much of their attention went towards protecting structures. Each home in Evacuation Zones 2 (be ready to go at any moment) and 3 (mandatory evacuation) was individually visited by a fire team to develop a plan for saving the structure. Then each home was revisited daily as long as the evacuation order was in effect. More dwelling in the woods means more dwellings to defend, putting more firefighters at risk and increasing costs to tax payers.

While it doesn't go far enough, HB 2225 is a good start in keeping homes out of fire-prone areas.

Best regards,

Heather Staten
Executive Director