

Testimony in Favor of Department of Forestry Budget (HB 5019)
Joint Subcommittee on Natural Resources
February 28, 2019

Co-Chair Taylor, Co-Chair Reardon and Members of the Committee ,

My name is Michael Barnes. I reside on my family forestland in Yamhill County. I also serve as the Vice President of the Oregon Small Woodlands Association. As a consulting forester I represent a number of family forest owners in several NW Oregon Counties.

I fully support the efforts and successes of the Oregon Department of Forestry. Through their efforts family forests such as mine have had superb protection from fire.

I would like to focus my remarks on the Private Forest Division of the Department. If I have one take away for you from these remarks it is this; Support of the division from the General Fund Budget should be viewed as an **Investment** not as an expense. In my 30 plus years as a consulting forester I have had the pleasure to work with dozens of family forest owners. Many have had little or no experience with the management of their forest resources. I always refer them to the Stewardship Forester at the Department of Forestry to receive guidance and information concerning the laws they must follow. Some are looking to a timber harvest, others may want to provide improved fish or wildlife habitat. In all of these efforts the general public benefits. They benefit through taxes that are generated to support the general fund or they benefit from the improved habitats as projects are completed. So again I say, this general fund support is an Investment.

With that focus in mind, I caution the committee concerning the funding shift outlined in the Governors budget from 60% to 50% from the Forest Products Harvest Tax. A regulatory program should not be funded in a manner that could create a lack of trust in the program and I am certain this change would cause that result. The current split of 60% general fund and 40% other funds provides the general public with confidence that the program is truly regulating forest land owners and operators. That degree of confidence should be maintained not reduced as proposed.

Thank you for the time to express my support and I trust you will see the value in continued general fund investment in the Department of Forestry.

Michael Barnes