

Chris and Tiffany Culbertson
9250 SW Ibach Ct
Tualatin, Oregon 97062
March 9, 2019

Representative Ken Helm

Oregon State Legislature
900 Court St. NE, H 490
Salem, Oregon 97301

Re: Opposition to HB 2656

Dear Chairman Helm and Committee Members:

We wish to submit testimony as follows for the hearing scheduled March 12, 2019 before the House Committee on Energy and Environment that will consider HB 2656. As a native Oregonian, it concerns me when legislation is introduced that will harm my family, rural Oregonians and, in fact, harm all Oregonians' ability to continue to prosper and enjoy our state.

Whitewater Forests, our family business, will be greatly harmed if this becomes law. Members of our family have derived their living from Oregon's growing forests for over sixty years. With considerable pride and expertise, we sustainably grow and harvest timber from our lands in Lane and Douglas Counties. HB 2656 seeks to criminalize responsible forest harvesting, building of access roads and use of forest chemicals. This bill will make growing, tending and harvesting of our private forests virtually impossible. Our work contributes to the local economy, forest health, fish and wildlife habitat, and water quality.

HB 2656 would continue the degradation of our rural economies. This bill would be devastating to Oregon's Wood Product Industry, which is so important to rural Oregon where most family forest owners not only work, but also live. HB 2656 would also have consequences for Oregon's overall economy. The areas defined in this bill are responsible for roughly 78% of the wood fiber used by Oregon mills to make sustainable carbon sequestering wood products. That harvest provides logs to more than 100 mills in Oregon and creates jobs for more than 60,000 Oregonians. If that harvest disappears, the mills and the tens of thousands of family-wage jobs disappear too.

The forest management tools banned by HB 2656 would dramatically reduce a family forest owner's ability to sustainably manage their forest and keep it healthy and productive. As a result, forests will become more prone to catastrophic wildfire, like the unmanaged federal forests in Oregon that are responsible for 86% of the acres burned in Oregon wildfires in the last 10 years. Wildfire is the greatest threat to water quality in Oregon. California is a good example of when forest practices are restricted, as in HB 2656, the result is increased wildfires, catastrophic losses, and lost water quality. Whether it be air quality, water quality or use of forest lands for recreation, or commerce I think we can all agree that the catastrophic wildfires we have seen in the recent past affect all Oregon residents. If passed, the restrictions set forth in this bill would only increase the wildfire problem that can be devastating to our entire state.

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Our family, as a part of the forest products industry, is proud to produce carbon neutral products that are needed by our society. Here in Oregon over three-quarters of the wood products produced come from private forests. Those who choose city life must rely on people like us to provide their food and shelter. HB 2656 devalues the significant contribution we make to society and shortsightedly denies the importance of local and sustainable forest products.

HB 2656 is bad for family forest owners, rural Oregon residents, the Oregon economy and Oregon forests. There is absolutely no science that can support the theory that Oregon will have improved water quality should HB 2656 pass. We ask that the committee dismiss this poor, short-sighted legislation.

Sincerely,

Chris and Tiffany Culbertson

CC:

Representative E. Werner Reschke

Representative Sheri Schouten

Representative Andrea Salinas

Representative Lynn Findley

Representative Janeen A. Sollman

Representative Marty Wilde

Representative Anna Williams

Representative Jack Zika

Representative Rachel Prusak