

Monday, March 11, 2019

To Chair Helm and the House Committee on Energy and Environment,

House Bill 2656 will be heard by your committee tomorrow, March 12. If enacted into law, this bill would have devastating financial consequences for private forestlandowners large and small and certainly for us here at Starker Forests.

HB 2656 would prohibit the following activities on forestland, statewide, "that supplies drinking water for one or more public water systems":

1. Clear-cut timber harvesting
2. Construction of logging roads
3. Any application of pesticides or fertilizers

It has been estimated that HB 2656 would cover approximately one million acres of forestland. The entire Willamette River watershed is covered under this bill. Starker Forests owns and manages about 89,000 acres in Benton and surrounding counties. Acres under our ownership that would be restricted by this draconian bill total approximately 68,000...77% of our total ownership.

HB 2656 is presumably meant to protect drinking water quality. Many studies have concluded that the best drinking water quality in Oregon originates on forestland, including managed private forestland, protected by both landowner stewardship and the Oregon Forest Practices Act. The Departments of Forestry and Environmental Quality have both concluded this. And yet, only forestland is covered under this bill, no other land uses.

We believe that HB 2656 is a misguided solution in search of a problem that does not exist. Starker Forests is adamantly opposed to this bill.

In addition, we believe that bills such as this one, that don't allow the most financially affected parties to even have a conversation about them until they land in a committee room for a hearing, are increasing an already [very wide](#) urban/rural divide. And that is a disservice to all Oregonians.

Please vote no on House Bill 2656.

Thank you for considering our appeal to you in this matter.

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