



## Woodland Owners Who Love Their Land

March 12, 2019

Re: Opposition to HB 2656

Chair Representative Helm and members of the House Energy & Environment Committee – My name is Jim James, Executive Director, Oregon Small Woodlands Association (OSWA). My organization represents the interests of Oregon's family forest owners. OSWA opposes HB 2656. It would destroy family forest owner's ability to sustainably manage 37% of Oregon's private forests. Family Forest owners manage, 3.6 million acres.

There is absolutely no scientific justification for the restrictions outlined in HB 2656. If anyone tells you so, they are either misinformed or have not spent the time to scientifically evaluate Oregon's Forest Practice Laws and their effectiveness in protecting water quality in Oregon's forests. As a life long forester, I am proud how the Oregon's Forest Practice Act protects water quality.

There is absolutely no science that can support the theory that Oregon will have improved water quality should HB 2656 pass. Department of Environmental Quality data confirms the best water quality in the state comes from forested watersheds, and science also shows there is no difference from watersheds with active forest management and those without active forest management. The theory in HB 2656 is a scam.

Limiting a landowner's ability to sustainably manage their forest will have negative consequences.

- Family forests will be less valuable. If forest management restrictions preclude a landowner from being able to afford their ownership, it can easily be converted to some other use that is more affordable. Vineyards are an easy conversion along with other agricultural crops. The public benefits from maintaining forests as forests.
- If the silvicultural tools restricted in HB 2656 are lost, forests will not be maintained as healthy forests and they will become more prone to catastrophic wildfires which we all know can be negative to water quality.
- HB 2656 would be devastating to Oregon's Wood Product Industry which is so important to Rural Oregon where most family forest owners live and also important to Oregon's economy, in general.
- The use of herbicides is critical to controlling invasive species such as Scotch broom, Himalayan blackberry, and Japanese knotweed on family forestland. These and other invasive species must be controlled to maintain healthy forests.

HB 2656 would cripple family forest owner's ability to manage their forests. The results would be crippling to all Oregon.