

Scott Gray <thegrayscott@gmail.com>

Members of the House Committee on Energy & Environment,

I am writing you today to state my strong opposition to HB 2656. As a professional Forester for almost 30 years, I can say with full confidence that HB 2656 is bad for Forestry and bad for Oregon. HB 2656 would radically change and hamper the practice of forestry under the guise of protecting domestic drinking water. Yet, there is no science that supports this. In fact, according to DEQ data, the best water quality in Oregon comes from forested watersheds, including those under active management. To restrict the use of herbicides, force thinning to be the only silvicultural harvesting tool and prohibit new road construction would not only be unnecessary, but is counterproductive to sustainable forestry.

Herbicides are used to control aggressive vegetation that may prevent establishment of young trees in the first few years of a stand's life. Herbicides are precisely applied to desired areas and vegetation. Forest herbicides are thoroughly tested and highly regulated by state and federal agencies, and are safe and effective. All streams, wetlands, lakes, schools and homes are buffered to protect people, drinking water and fish habitat. Third party testing and analysis of herbicide applications in forested watersheds confirm safe drinking water conditions.

Clearcutting is a valuable tool to the forester. Many of our native tree species thrive in open sun, particularly Douglas-fir. Others, such as western hemlock and western red cedar are described as shade-tolerant (not shade loving) and also grow best in sun. Clearcuts are a necessary management tool to promote our native tree species. HB 2656 would prohibit clearcuts, eventually reducing the productivity of our forests. Often times, thinned forests, especially along the coast and other wind-prone areas can be heavily damaged by high wind events, further reducing the land productivity.

Our working forests are vital to Oregon's economy. More than 60,000 people in this State are employed in our forest and forest products industries. Our forests are renewable, eco-friendly and a great example of a product produced by solar energy. These forests are a valuable natural resource that can continually provide products that benefit Oregonians and creates wealth the people of our State. And we have proven that we can manage forest for timber production while protecting the other forest resources, including safe drinking water. We should be encouraging higher production and use of lumber from our forests, not less.

For the above reasons, and many more actually, I strongly oppose HB 2656 and ask you to do the same.

Sincerely,

Scott Gray