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I am writing in support of HB 2656, Oregon's Safe Water's Act because, as our Native American allies have told us, water is life. And right now, Oregon's water is becoming deadly.

As someone who grew up in Oregon, it is alarming to me to see how rapidly our remaining natural forests are dwindling to a patchwork of clearcuts and plantations, devoid of any wildlife and running streams. Climate change is upon us, and Oregon's natural forests play a critical role in mitigating the worst effects of climate change. All one needs to do is to go to an old growth forest like Opal Creek Wilderness and see what our forests used to look like: There you will find spongy, mossy soils that retain water, clear running streams and waterfalls, towering, majestic trees, a limited understory, and abundant wildlife. Contrast that to the industrial tree plantations we now see all over our state. There you will find trees all of a uniform height, no spongy soil, and little to no running water. When the major downpours occur, as they have been as climate change accelerates, the water runs off the dry soil and pools into ponds and lakes. With little moisture, and forests all at the same height, these industrial tree plantations are the quickest to go up in flames. With no large overstory, and with average temperatures on the rise, the water that runs off from these plantations heats up. This warm standing water combined with the fertilizers and herbicides and pesticides applied after clearcuts is the perfect condition for toxic algae to bloom. The factors that contribute to toxic algae outbreak and the cyanotoxins that they produce are: nutrient pollution (which comes in the form of fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides) and climate change. One of the outcomes of climate change is larger storms with greater water runoff and higher temperatures. So we can expect this deadly toxin to continue to multiply unless we change our habits.

Oregon Governor Kate Brown's declaration of a state of emergency last year in Salem for cyanotoxins in Salem's water supply should have been a major wakeup call to our legislators. Yet nothing has been done to rectify this problem. Is that because the timber industry has, as the Oregonian has recently documented so clearly, polluted our politics? Have they become so powerful with their campaign contributions that our elected officials fear acting on this issue, even though this toxic algae is, literally, a matter of life and death? Cyanotoxins are cancer-causing toxins that are particularly deadly for people with weakened immune systems, for children, the elderly and pregnant women.

The people that are engaged in these major clearcut and aerial spraying operations are not, as they would have us believe, by and large Oregon residents who care about our drinking water. Many of the logging companies are owned by Wall Street investors whose only goal is to maximize their profits and liquidate their assets on as short a rotation as possible, clearcutting our forests, loading up the raw logs on logging trucks, and then sending them to ports for export. Worse yet, these Wall Street investors are being subsidized to the tune of over \$300 million a year with our Oregon taxpayer --money that could be spent on our schools and other critical expenditures.

Once they have done their damage, these corporations then expect us, the taxpayer, to pick up the tab and pay for water treatment plants. Yet our healthy forests once provided this service for free. Why should the taxpayer be forced to pay the millions of dollars in water treatment for corporations to maximize their profits, leave behind a toxic water supply, and do so at the expense of our public health?

If we begin to manage our forests as forests—and not as industrial tree plantations—without the kind of clearcutting and aerial spraying we have now, we will accomplish several things. Oregon will become the model state for creating climate-resilient and climate-smart forests, that are less prone to go up rapidly in flames the way plantations do, instead of the corporate handmaiden it has become. We will begin to flip our forests from carbon sources back to carbon sinks, the way nature intended them to be. We will begin to restore the spongy soils of natural forests that hold moisture for long periods, thus limiting rapid runoff of downpours. And we will protect a healthy water supply for present and future generations. Let's get to work. Our public health is priceless, and the public interest is greater than the profits of a few.

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