

## **House Energy and Environment Committee**

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### **HB 2656 is wrong for Oregon**

Greg Peterson PE

I am a registered professional engineer, with 45 yrs experience with all environmental issues. HB 2656 is a blatant take of private property and will stop Oregon forestry in its tracks, by prohibiting clear cuts, road building, and pesticide/fertilizer application. There is no science-based rationale for such drastic curtailment and walking away from the enormous investment we've already made in our forests. By removing incentives for forest management, it will create overstocked stands and encourage even more noxious and invasive species, which will not only be seedbeds, but also provide ladder fuels for wildfire. Unmanaged forestlands have been the site of 86% of Oregon wildfires over the past decade, which destroyed a valuable resource and emitted millions of tons of air pollutants, impacting the health of Oregonians, tourism, and greenhouse gas emissions.

HB2656 works against the goal of limiting carbon emissions, since well managed forests are the only proven affordable method of sequestering carbon. HB 2656 ignores options that could incentivize carbon sequestration, such as; retaining property tax deferral, credits for; longer rotation, thinning, converting nonproductive land to forestry, changing building codes to use more wood products, salvaging more logging debris, and increasing down/dead tree salvage. Such incentives have very low costs compared to far more expensive cap & trade approach.

We use a lot of forest products, to build homes and infrastructure, and in our offices, kitchens, and bathrooms. As there are few alternatives and there will always be a demand, if we stop sourcing these products in Oregon, they **will** come from other states and countries, which leads to unnecessary fossil fuel consumption and significantly higher cost to Oregonians.

We are small woodland owners that have invested decades of hard work, and are exemplary stewards of the land, growing a crop that takes 40 to 70 years to grow, while all the while exposed to risks from insects, invasive species, noxious weeds, storm damage, fire, erratic log markets, and the most ominous risk of all, legislative takes.

Our land is too steep to use any harvest method other than clearcutting. We constantly battle noxious and invasive species that other Oregonians brought into our state. Pesticides are the only viable means of combat and we use them sparingly for a few years at any location. Most roads are already established, but may require upgrades and gravel to improve worker safety as well as access for replanting and possibly fighting wildfire. We always use the best practices available and cherish the clean water that we provide, as it is our legacy.

Forestry is a cost-taker business, in that it can not pass increased costs along. HB 2656 effectively eliminates any chance for a return on decades of investment and hard work. It will eliminate funds I had planned to use for retirement, health care, and continuing my son's education. If HB 2656 passes. my family would be devastated and forced to sell at a substantial loss.

There is over a six-fold increase in fire risk on unmanaged forests, compared to nearby managed forests<sup>(1)</sup>. While not as restrictive as HB 2656, California's Forest Practices Act and other restrictions have severely curtailed forest management, which contributed to its 2018 wildfires emitting 50 million metric tons of carbon dioxide, or about [one-eighth of the entire state's](#)

[annual emissions](#), largely [wiping out two decades](#) of the state's hard fought greenhouse gas reductions and caused terrible air quality.<sup>(2)</sup> Berkeley is upwind and 150 miles away from Paradise, yet for over 2 weeks this past summer, my son was overwhelmed with dense smoke and choked by air-borne particulates, with many students having to wear a mask. Paradise was surrounded by unmanaged thick brush and unmanaged forests, with overly dense stands of trees throughout the city. With proper management, this summer's wildfire would have been far less or prevented all together.

Today's forestry is science-based, continuously updating it's practices to protect workers, the environment and neighbors. Instead of stopping this industry, it should be recognized that well managed forestry is an essential part of Oregon's rural economy and is the best proven method to enhance carbon sequestration and reduce the risk of uncontrolled wild fire.

Our legislature should encourage, not discourage, Oregon private forestry. HB 2656 is wrong for Oregon.

Sincerely  
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References:

1)California's Devastating Fires Are Man-Caused -- But Not In The Way They Tell Us, Chuck DeVore, Forbes Magazine, July 30, 2018

2)California's Deadliest Fires Could Have Been Mitigated by Prevention, Chuck DeVore, Forbes Magazine, Nov 16, 2018