

Oregon House Energy & Environment Committee

Re: HB 2656 – Strong Opposition

Representatives:

I am Rick Barnes, a forestry consultant and small woodland owner. I am here to strongly oppose House Bill 2656 which prohibits certain forest operation activities on forestland that supplies drinking water for one or more public water systems. I want to make a few key points as to why I oppose the bill then point out how this bill will impact me directly.

1. The Oregon Forest Practices Act is an excellent law and is designed to protect all forest resources including drinking water. Science shows that the forest practices act is working well.
2. This bill, if passed, will give the landowners a huge incentive to convert their lands to other uses.
3. This bill, if passed, will greatly decrease the productivity of Oregon's private forestlands and thus reduce the amount of carbon that our private forests are sequestering.

Following is my story:

My wife and I have been small woodland owners since 2000. We work very hard at managing our forests in a sustainable manner. As a result of these efforts, we were awarded the 2013 Oregon Tree Farmer of the Year and 2014 Western Region Tree Farmer of the Year at the national level. Following is how this bill will impact us:

1. We manage portions of our property using uneven aged management and some which is better suited for even aged management (Type 3 Harvest). If we are forced to use uneven aged management for all of our forestland, we will see a loss in forest productivity due to the requirement to try to grow the next generation of Douglas-fir in the shade. Douglas-fir does not grow well in the shade. This loss in forest productivity will translate into less carbon dioxide being converted to oxygen. This is an impact that is not consistent with our management objectives nor, to my understanding, of the goals of this legislature as evidenced by all the effort being put into Cap and Trade legislation.
2. I am currently only a couple of years away from retirement. I have spent an incredible number of weekends and work days on our tree farm nurturing our forest and making improvements. For the 19 years we have owned the property, our plan has targeted an area for a Type 3 harvest to supplement our retirement funds. If House Bill 2656 passes, this planned contribution to our retirement plan will basically be cut in half.
3. I apply herbicides on our forestland primarily to control grass around our seedlings and to control Himalaya blackberries, poison oak (which I am susceptible to) and yellow star thistle which is a problematic noxious weed on our forestland. If we cannot use herbicides, our successful reforestation efforts, which we are proud to showcase, will not be as fruitful in the future. In addition, these species can act as fuels in the event of a forest fire which can potentially change a wild fire into a catastrophic event.
4. There are portions of our property that I have converted from Himalaya blackberry patches to conifer forests. This conversion would not have been possible if I could not

have used herbicides to kill the Himalaya blackberries and to control the grass around the seedlings during their first couple of years.

5. We often need to build roads to improve our logging systems. Having roads in the correct location improve our ability to log in a manner that maximizes the protection of soils and other resources during harvesting operations. Having roads provides valuable access in the event of a wildfire.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

Rick Barnes

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