

Dear Representative Helm,

I am deeply concerned by what is being proposed by HB 2656 that will destroy decades of scientifically backed work between previous legislative bodies and private forest landowners in Oregon. The persons behind HB 2656 have little science behind their proposals and apparently have no idea what the consequences of their regulations will be as they will all but destroy the vibrant forest industry that we have today.

Oregon is the #1 forest producer in the country and could remain so indefinitely if left alone. If the proposed legislation becomes law, timber production will ultimately become less, mills will close never to return, and of course many jobs will be lost. If you do not believe, look at the situation in California which now is trying to figure out how to do more forest management on state lands to mitigate the fire hazard. We will be constrained in managing our land with the prospect of our private lands looking like Federally owned lands with much less timber harvested, decadent timber stands where catastrophic fire is common (86% of the acres burned on average in the last decade in Oregon), and management costs most of the revenue derived from the land. What is a private landowners incentive in that? People will shorten their rotation age to a minimum, invest as little as possible and in some cases convert their land to agriculture, homes or anything but commercial forestry. The young, vibrant forests that we have today will not be there and we can expect more fire on private land.

I have owned my forest property for 55 years and hope to see my children and grandchildren enjoy the property. However, under the proposed changes, myself a graduate forester, will have to maybe rethink my forest management.

Thank you for your attention. I wish that I could tour you around my 203 acre tree farm that has been Tree Farm certified for 51 years.

Michael Atkinson
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