

**DATE:** March 8, 2019

**TO:** Oregon State Legislature  
House Committee on Energy & Environment

**FROM:** Margaret Banks  
Society of American Foresters Member ID 9446  
Certified Forester ID 1926  
260 NW 336th Avenue  
Hillsboro, OR 97124

**SUBJECT:** Testimony in Opposition to House Bill 2656

I am a native Oregonian with a strong tie to our environment and forests. I was raised in rural areas and have spent my life working and playing in Oregon's forests, both public and private, in various regions of this State. I care deeply for our forests and their health and productivity and their many benefits, including clean water, fresh air, fish and wildlife, hunting and recreation, and timber production to name some.

From my personal experience I am able to tell you that Oregon's Forest Practice Act (FPA) works and works well. First implemented in 1971, it is a living document that has been updated many times over the years based on scientific research. Oregon law gives the Board of Forestry primary responsibility to interpret the FPA and set rules for forest practices. ODF is responsible for enforcing those requirements by reviewing pre-operation plans, overseeing operations, ensuring reforestation, investigating complaints and enforcing corrective actions when violations occur. If you take the time to read the FPA you will come to understand that it contains extensive and specific regulations that protect our environment, including water quality. I encourage you to read the FPA and to speak with the Board of Forestry (BOF) and forestry researchers at Oregon State University. You need to do so before voting too quickly on any bill that would supplant the FPA and prohibit active forest management throughout much of Oregon's forests. **HB 2656 is a bad bill; it is bad for our forests and bad for Oregon and it is not based on science or fact.**

Our actively managed forests are healthy forests that are providing clean water, fresh air, fish and wildlife. In fact, some wildlife species depend on them and cannot survive in unmanaged old growth forests. Too many unmanaged forests in this State are unhealthy and contain too much undergrowth, rendering them susceptible to severe wildfire and their damaging consequences. If you need to see for yourself, tour them. We need to encourage *more* forestland in this State to be actively managed, not prohibit active management in many of them.

Additional reasons to vote against HB 2656 and allow the FPA and the Board of Forestry to continue to regulate forest operations:

- According to DEQ data, the best water quality in Oregon comes from forested watersheds, *including those under active management*.
- Forest operations, such as harvest, road work and herbicide applications are routinely coordinated with water masters of local municipal water systems.
- 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.

- Herbicides are used to control aggressive vegetation that may prevent establishment of young trees in the first few years of a 40- to 60-year stand life. Herbicides are precisely applied to desired areas and vegetation, and cannot be applied in weather that allows them to drift.
- The Oregon Department of Agriculture requires control of Class A noxious weeds, and in some cases herbicides are the only effective means of control.
- 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 (Type 3 harvest operations) are a necessary management tool to promote our native tree species. HB 2656 would prohibit clearcuts, eventually reducing the productivity of our forests.
- Actively managed forests provide sustainable, environmentally friendly wood products while sequestering carbon. Lumber used in homes and buildings stores their carbon for many decades. More carbon is sequestered from trees that are planted after clearcut harvests that favor our native tree species.
- Our working forests are vital to Oregon's economy. They are perpetually renewable and are a raw natural resource that can continually provide products that benefit Oregonians and creates wealth for our schools and State. We should be encouraging higher production and use of lumber from our forests, not less. More than 60,000 people in this State are employed in our forest and forest products industries.
- Harvest has already been heavily curtailed over too much of Oregon's state and federal forestland, resulting in decreased health and reduced growth. We need to work to improve growth from our remaining working forests, and we need to use all available, scientifically sound tools and methods to do so, including the use of appropriate fertilizers, which would be prevented by HB 2656. It is unacceptable to prevent the use of a safe and effective tool.
- There are small communities in Oregon that have fire risk similar to what Paradise, California did. California is finally looking at increasing harvest levels and management of their forests to decrease fire risk and protect communities. We need to do the same. If you remember back to last summer you should understand that smoke emitted from devastating wildfires creates extreme air pollution and releases tons of carbon into the atmosphere, destroys homes, kills people and negatively impacts Oregonian's health. It is unacceptable to create more unmanaged forests in Oregon like HB 2656 would.

Our working forests are a true State treasure. **Join others to defeat HB 2656 and allow Oregon's forests to continue to be actively managed to ensure they remain a treasure for future generations.**

Sincerely,

Margaret Banks  
SAF 9446; CF 1926