

March 12, 2019

Representative Ken Helm
Chair, House Energy and Environment Committee
900 Court St. NE, H-490
Salem, Oregon 97301

Re: HB 2656

Dear Representative Helm;

It is 400-mile round trip from my home to Salem for a gamble that I might be able to testify on HB 2656 this afternoon. Consequently, I have decided not to attend the hearing. Please make this letter a part of the record for HB 2656.

I am a member of the Society of American Foresters, the Oregon Small Woodlands Association, and the American Society of Farm Managers and Rural Appraisers. Our family owns and operates a tree farm of several hundred acres near Coquille, OR. Our tree farm has been in the family for more than 60 years - three generations. My heirs want to keep it in our family as an operating tree farm. It has been managed on a responsible and sustained yield basis over the years we've owned it. Our tree farm was, in fact, chosen as the 2009 Coos County Tree Farmer of the Year. We take some pride in that.

HB 2656 gives me great concern, however, as it does many other private forestland owners.

First, this bill would be extremely restrictive on our current best forestry practices. It would probably be worse than California's forestry practices. I did some timberland appraisals in California, east of Sacramento, a number of years ago. I found their forest practice rules to be so restrictive that there was very little harvesting on private forestlands, especially smaller ownerships. The brush and fuel loading was quite obvious. It was no surprise to me when so many acres of California burned up last fall. I do not want to see Oregon fall into a similar pattern.

This bill precludes effective management of invasive and native weeds which substantially inhibit the reproduction of preferred native forest species for commercial uses, water quality enhancement, and carbon storage. This will result in not only a significant delay in rotation times for commercial timber, but a significant reduction in timber stocking (density) at maturity. That all translates into higher logging costs and significantly reduced returns to the landowner.

Finally, as noted above, this bill would significantly reduce the value of forest crops and consequently forestland values. That would ultimately mean a reduction in local property tax bases and a parallel reduction in local economies. Currently, Coos County is near bankruptcy.

To my knowledge, there is no science which supports this bill. However, as the observant know, science, facts, and economics are not always consulted or relied upon in politics. I urge you to consider the science. Consult with practicing foresters. And I urge you to consider the negative economic and social impacts this bill will have on lives of so many rural Oregonians.

I wonder if this bill is a solution in search of a problem. Another words, what is the purpose of the bill? What do the sponsors hope to accomplish? Do the benefits of this bill outweigh the devastating impacts it would have on private forestland owners? If so, can you quantify them? I have to conclude that this bill was either not well thought out, economically, or was intended to be harmful to the forestry sector.

I'm sure many of your constituents have an altruistic belief that this bill will be good for the State. But, I'm just as sure that there are some constituents who have a depraved desire to see the forestry and timber businesses collapse. I hope you understand that the bill will not likely accomplish the first but will most certainly result in the latter - the destruction of economically viable tree farms, as you have undoubtedly heard from numerous owners already.

Again, I encourage you to take the high road and consider the negative impacts of this bill on those of us in rural Oregon, and have some compassion.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter.

Kent Tresidder
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CC: Representative Dallas Heard
Representative David Brock Smith
Senator Dallas Heard

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