

Bruce Alber <bpalber@comcast.net>

Dear Chair Helm,

Please oppose HB 2656, this bill will kill an entire critical industry in Oregon.

I am a professional forester with 43 years of field experience and proud of the job I do to protect and grow trees in Oregon.

The pretense that water quality needs to be protected from modern forest management practices is false. EWEB, the Eugene Water and Electric Board has been testing the waters in the rivers that serve its water supply for herbicide residues and their independent data shows that the water is clean and safe! Oregon forest practices are among the most closely regulated in the Nation and we foresters are proud of the work we do to protect the environment, produce the only renewable building product, timber. By actively managing Oregon forests on private and State lands, millions of tons of CO2 are stored every year which helps fight climate change. Unmanaged forests such as the Federal lands are burning up in wildfires at a rate that may well exceed any carbon storage that they could do. Remember, Federal Forests are overgrown, roads are being abandoned, and noxious and invasive weeds are growing out of control. Without a good, well maintained Federal road system, access to fight wildfires is limited and small fires can get out of control quickly, destroying hundreds of thousands of acres of forests every year!

HB 2656 is a terrible bill and should be voted down.

Please oppose HB 2656!

HB 2656 is extreme legislation that would ban active management of forestland on over a million acres in some of Oregon's most productive forestland by prohibiting harvest, road building, and application of pesticides and fertilizer in forests that serve as public drinking water sources. The bill claims these restrictions are necessary to protect water quality, which is completely false. Oregon Department of Environmental Quality data confirms the best water quality in Oregon comes from forested watersheds, including those with active management.

Oregon's forests are currently managed under some of the strictest environmental regulations in the nation, much of which is explicitly protective of water quality. Maintaining the productive use of private forests is critical to the economic and social stability of many Oregon counties and communities. Private forests sustainably produce 78% of Oregon's timber harvest, support over 100 manufacturers, and employ more than 60,000 Oregonians in family-wage jobs.

HB 2656 would remove Oregon from its position as the number one softwood lumber and plywood producer in the country, risking the shuttering of mills and the loss of thousands of family wage jobs in already vulnerable rural communities.

HB 2656 is also bad for the environment. Taking away tools to manage non-native, invasive weeds such as Scotch broom, Himalayan blackberry and Japanese knotweed, would choke out young trees, and clog forest roads and riparian areas, impacting fire protection and wildlife habitat.

All HB 2656 does is force private forests into the same non-management as federal forests, where overstocked, diseased and inaccessible landscapes have generated 80 percent of acres lost to fire over

the past decade. Carbon emissions from wildfire smoke emit millions of metric tons of air pollution, are costly to rural economies, and negatively impact Oregonians' health.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments in opposition to HB 2656.

Sincerely,

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