

To our Oregon legislators:

Pass HB 2656 to protect drinking water in Oregon.

It is shocking to learn the nightmare problems Rockaway Beach experienced from clear cuts in the watershed of their drinking water. Turbidity and the subsequent adding of chemicals to their water created serious problems, yet, the forest surrounding Rockaway's watershed continues to be clear cut and without any more stringent regulations.

We recently learned the forest surrounding the watershed of Short Creek which is our drinking water in Oceanside, will likely be clear cut this summer. How can we be sure that we are not the next Rockaway? Although the timber company says they are being a "good neighbor," we do not know what chemicals they will spray. We don't know if silt that occasionally plagues our water treatment plant now will be increased after the deep canyons surrounding Short Creek are clear cut.

I attended the hearing of HB 2656 in Salem to listen to both sides of the issue. What surprised me most was that no one in the forest industry that spoke against the bill explained exactly how the proposed protections for drinking water will bankrupt the industry or stop logging. They did not explain how creating larger buffers to clear cuts along deep canyons above streams or how stopping aerial spraying that drifts over sensitive areas and into people's homes is going to create a loss of jobs.

I did not hear any concern for the health of people in our communities. I didn't hear anyone address Rockaway to explain how or why this happened or how it could have been prevented. All I heard was this will hurt the industry and there will be a loss of jobs. I am not convinced that protecting Oregon communities from toxic algae blooms that are possibly created by excess nitrogen runoff from fertilizers and warmer water from unprotected streams will really create a hardship. We don't know yet why Salem's water was tainted but wouldn't it be prudent to be cautious and more careful until problems like these are understood and solved? What I did learn is that communities are forking over lots of money on equipment to

handle the increased amount of silt and chemical contaminants that overwhelm their drinking water systems.

I am not again logging. We used wood to build our house here although I have to tell you, from what I understand we were not able to use Oregon forest products because they are rare. Most logs are shipped abroad and I am told the building materials we used had to come from Canada. Smarter forest practices could involve selective cutting and allowing trees to grow larger, then making wood products locally from those trees, which would create more local jobs.

The greatest concern I have is not just to the forest and streams which provide habitat for lots of critters and fish in a symbiotic ecosystem—my concern extends to the people in all communities in Oregon who cannot afford to buy the forest surrounding their drinking water to protect it. This is not some third lawless country. It is incredulous to me that a progressive state like Oregon that holds so much beauty and that has an impressive history of environmental protections would not pass a bill that can ensure clean water that our families can drink.

It is time to look at the big picture. Pass HB2656.

Respectfully,
Melissa Farlow
Oceanside, Oregon resident