

HB 2469: Hearing for second dwelling, 3-19-2019

Good afternoon, committee members.

My name is Bonnie Shumaker. My husband and I own and care for 160 forested acres in Washington County. We are active members of Oregon Small Woodlands Association and are Master Woodland Managers. Our tree farm is certified under the American Tree Farm System. We are particularly pleased that in 2017 we were able to expand our tree farm to its original 160-acre homestead.

Most of our trees are young – under 20 years. Their maturity will happen beyond our lifetime, and we would love for this little piece of heaven to remain in our family for many generations. I often hear about “Century Farms,” but have not heard of “Century Forestlands.” HB 2469 would help create “Century Forestlands” by encouraging intergenerational continuity.

Oregon’s Land Use Laws were written in 1973 to provide needed statewide protection for farm and forestland. Goal 4 of the land use laws covers forestland. The goal begins: *“To conserve forest lands by maintaining the forest land base and to protect the state’s forest economy...”* This protection of forest land has been successful. 98% of Oregon’s forests have been retained since 1974; certainly, something to applaud. These forestlands provide clean air, water, habitat, jobs and help fight climate change.

This success has been accomplished by restricting development, but new issues have arisen for both forest and farm lands – an aging ownership. According to the OFRI publication “Oregon Forest Facts, 2019-20,” family forestland owners own and care for 3.6 million acres of Oregon’s forestland, about 35 percent of Oregon’s privately-owned forests. The 2004 Family Forestland Survey done for OFRI by CFM Research states that half of the owners are 65 or older. Many have owned their land for more than 25 years. In both farm and forest, the upcoming issue of intergenerational transfer is huge. Forestland needs a tool to help make this transfer successful.

Land that is zoned for agriculture has such a tool: a second dwelling is allowed for a family member on the same lot or parcel as the owner. Goal 3 of Oregon’s land use laws covers agricultural land and this has been allowed for a long time “if the farm operator does or will require the assistance of the relative in the management of the farm.” The thought was that farmers might need daily help on the land. Since this option of a second dwelling was already in place, it was easy to apply it to the emerging intergenerational issue.

Goal 4 for forest land excluded the second dwelling provision from the very beginning. Perhaps we did not make a big enough argument about the importance of managing forestland. Allowing extended families to live and work together on their land would help create a seamless intergenerational transfer.

It is important to note that:

- Small woodland parcels tend to be near the wildland/urban interface, making them vulnerable for development, but also accessible for a family member to pursue a career while living on the land and learning forest management
- As they age, forestland owners find they cannot do the work they used to do. The next generation can help fill in the slack and be prepared for the orderly transfer of land and management
- Growing and managing forestland takes generations – trees grow slowly
- “Ties to the Land” attempts to address the intergenerational transfer issue, but not having the option of living on the land is an obstacle. The second dwelling option would be another tool.
- The second dwelling for a relative would be on the same lot or parcel and no more than 200 feet from the existing primary dwelling– there is NO land division.
- The second dwelling must pass fire-safe regulations
- Only forestland 80 acres and larger that already qualifies for a dwelling would be eligible

Please support HB2469 to help with intergenerational transfer. Maybe down the road we could hear about “Century Forestlands.”

I would be happy to answer your questions.

Bonnie Shumaker
bshumaker@coho.net