

To: House Committee on Natural Resources

Re: A Letter in Opposition to HB 2659. Relating to tax programs related to forestlands

Dear Representative Witt and members of the Committee on Natural Resources

We are forest land owners in Clackamas County, proudly owning 39 acres that have never had any pesticides or herbicides applied in our 37 years of stewardship. 30 acres are in mature mixed stand native forestland that has been selectively and sustainably harvested. We also have 3 acres in noble fir Christmas trees, 3 acres in pastureland and about 2 acres in yard, garden, berries and orchard. The products from our garden, berries and orchard are consumed by us, with excess being sold at a local farmers market and to restaurants who value our organic practices.

We are deeply concerned that, in looking for ways to raise revenue, HB 2659 will severely impact our ability to continue what we feel is environmentally supportive practice and lifestyle. We have looked at the wording of the bill closely and, quite frankly, don't understand many of the distinctions it highlights as bad practices, worthy of taxation. Here are some examples: 1) To manage both our Christmas trees and to mitigate fire danger, it is good practice to remove limbs from the bottoms of trees (especially since we don't chemically suppress unwanted grasses or shrubs, yet it appears that this management practice would be a non-natural forest activity. 2) We are constantly planting diverse trees when there are opportunities for reforestation, but, as we read this bill, if we do this in an open area, the trees we plant won't count as trees until they have been in the ground for several years, creating a financial burden for "doing the right thing," in reforesting open land.

Just last month, we appeared in Salem in support of HB 2020, the carbon cap and trade bill, because we feel that it is time to acknowledge and take action regarding climate change. Specifically, we wanted to stress the importance of carbon sequestration and the role that Oregon's forests play in mitigating the harmful effects of carbon emissions. At a time when we need more trees than ever – never mind what kind they may be – this taxation bill, as written, will thwart a goal that we feel is of paramount importance. As written, HB2659 would give absolutely no incentive to plant trees, if the land upon which they were planted could not be placed in a tax deferral status. 3) Although they are not large, we do have a few open "roads" (more like trails) that enable us to drive our tractor into various places within our woods, to gather up wood and forest debris. It would appear that these access lanes would be taxed, under the current bill's wording.

Possibly, HB 2659 was written with large timber companies and their destructive environmental practices in mind, and the fact that large corporations do not pay their fair share, but its current language would impact small forestland owners like us in a huge way. Please consider carefully how this bill's language would harm environmentally responsible practices of small farms – there are many of us. Planting trees and responsible forest management should be encouraged, not punished.

Sincerely,

Cathy and Roger Fantz
Trillium Forest Farm
Eagle Creek, Oregon

cc: State Representative Anna Williams, Rep.AnnaWilliams@oregonlegislature.gov
State Senator Chuck Thomsen, Sen.ChuckThomsen@oregonlegislature.gov