



To: Senate Committee on the Environment and Natural Resources
Chair Dembrow
Senator Olsen
Senator Bentz
Senator Prozanski
Senator Roblan

From: Bob Van Dyk, Wild Salmon Center

Date: March 28, 2019

RE: Support for SB 893 re: Forest Transfer Program

Chair Dembrow and Members of the Committee:

For the record, my name is Bob Van Dyk, and I lead the Oregon policy efforts for the Wild Salmon Center. Wild Salmon Center works with partners to conserve healthy wild salmon fisheries across the North Pacific.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony in support of SB 893, which creates a forest transfer program. Wild Salmon Center has worked with Trout Unlimited and Oregon Outdoors to help shape this bill, which has also been endorsed by the Backcountry Hunters and Anglers Association. The Oregon Department of Forestry also generously shared their time discussing improvements to the bill.

This bill grew out of a problem that is common to both Common School and Board of Forestry lands. Each of these state forest types face demands from the public that are at times in tension. Goals like timber harvest, water quality, recreation, and habitat protection often cannot be produced from a specific tract of land.

In the case of the Common School Lands, as well as of the state lands in Washington State, this problem has been addressed in part by a forest transfer program that allows for the disconnection of the state forestlands from their current legal mandate. Oregon created such a mechanism for Common School Lands in 2017 through Senate Bill 847.

This bill follows the same pathway for the Board of Forestry lands. Lands that some value most highly for habitat or recreation can be pressured for timber harvest, creating tension. This bill creates a mechanism to transfer select parcels of Board of Forestry land out of the current legal framework while still keeping them public, and even under Board of Forestry management.

Lands subject to such a transfer would be identified by the Board of Forestry, appraised for value, approved for transfer by the local county in which the lands reside, and then advanced with the

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identification of the new management direction, manager, and with consideration for the current beneficiaries of revenue from the lands. To complete a transfer would require legislation that completes the transfer and identifies the revenue needed to compensate current beneficiaries. We envision each of these transfers being somewhat unique to differing circumstances.

In this bill we consciously avoided the question of the proper interpretation of greatest permanent value, which is currently subject to litigation led by Linn County. Whatever the proper interpretation, it is clear that providing some compensation to current beneficiaries from state forests is a possible pathway to resolving disputes amicably.

In closing, we have heard from Ms. Morgan a desire to work on this legislation in the interim, and we have agreed to do so, as we want this to be a well-supported tool that is solution focused.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this comment. I would be happy to answer any questions.