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To: Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee
From: Jason Gonzales, Oregon Wild
Date: April 2, 2019
RE: Senate Bill 926

Chair Dembrow and Members of the Committee:

I am submitting this testimony as a representative of Oregon Wild, and our 20,000 members and supporters, who are the foundation of Oregon Wild's work to protect and defend wildlife, waters and wild places. Oregon Wild has been intimately involved in the design, creation, and experience of many of Oregon's incredible public lands for over 45 years. Our offices around the state work hard to advocate for the use and protection of those lands, a major economic driver for rural parts of our state, every day. I urge this committee to take action and vote yes on SB926 in order to increase the public trust in, and support the recreational use of, our incredible State Forests.

SB926 would take the important step of aligning a confusing policy that differs across state and federal public lands, and would benefit every day users. The vast majority of Oregon's publicly owned and enjoyed forests banned aerial spraying of herbicides decades ago, later allowing it in limited situations - but State Forests continue to employ the technique frequently. SB926 would have a minimal impact on the departments that manage State Forests, or the industries that benefit from harvesting them.

These State Forests provide a key drinking water source to communities and households; and important recreational areas for families to hike, camp, and boat. State Forests provide much needed foraging, fishing and hunting grounds for Oregonians as well as those who visit our state. Many of those hikers, campers, hunters and anglers may not be aware of the risk they might expose themselves to when crossing over the wrong ridge, or coming around the wrong bend in the river: helicopters far overhead spraying steep hillsides with cocktails of chemicals that include endocrine-disruptors and probable-carcinogens. Users of public lands should be protected from this exposure by requiring public land managers to use methods that are easier to control, and pose less risk of drifting toxins such as manual clearing or backpack-application.

The use of aerial herbicides poses undue risk to Oregonians, and is simply not necessary for the effective management of our public lands. This has been clearly demonstrated by the National Forest and Bureau of Land Management, who ceased the practice over 30 years ago, citing concerns of human health and safety. Those federal land managers, who take care of the

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majority of Oregon's public forests have grown healthy forests, created jobs and lumber, and provided clean and safe recreation to our state with safer methods such as ground level applications of herbicides to control invasive species. These federal forests have become so popular with users that many are crowded and on the edge of over-use, making our State Forests and their trails and streams all the more important to Oregonians in need of an outdoor experience.

Public Lands should be available for the public good, and in these times of record harvest and record income from much of our State Forests, it is important that we recognize all of the public good that comes from these lands, not just board feet and profits for a single industry. State Forests should be held to the highest standards of multi-use and community responsibility. These trails, ridges and rivers exist for the benefit of all Oregonians, and those who visit our great state, not just the logging companies and their profits.

Please consider these values and vote to support SB926. A vote for SB926 is a vote for public lands, a vote for clean water and healthy forests. A vote in favor of SB926 would mean increased public confidence in our State Forest system and an increase in the safety of those who visit these places. Importantly, it would not restrict the ability of the Department of Forestry to sell trees and execute logging contracts, and in fact, could mean that the department is generating even more jobs for local communities.

Thank you for hearing my testimony today, I am available for any follow up questions or to provide more information on any specifics at your request.

Sincerely,

Jason Gonzales

Forest and Watershed Campaign Organizer, Oregon Wild

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