



## Associated Oregon Loggers, Inc.

P.O. Box 12339, Salem, OR 97309 • [www.oregonloggers.org](http://www.oregonloggers.org)

(503) 364-1330 • [aastor@oregonloggers.org](mailto:aastor@oregonloggers.org)

*"Voice of forest management working families since 1969"*

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March 2, 2021

The Honorable Brad Witt, Chair  
House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources  
Oregon State Capitol  
Salem, OR 97301

Subject: Bill to Eliminate Oregon Forest Resources Institute (OFRI) – HB 2357 (**OPPOSE**)

Representative Witt, Vice Chairs Breese-Iverson and Hudson, and Committee Members:

### Introduction

For the record, my name is Amanda Astor. I am here on behalf of the Associated Oregon Loggers (AOL) as their forest policy manager. AOL is the statewide trade association and voice of Oregon's forest operators, based in Salem. I am a forester with undergraduate degrees in forest management, forest biology and a graduate certificate in forest carbon: science, policy and management. I am a leader in Oregon Women in Timber, Oregon Society of American Foresters, Lane Families for Farms and Forests, and the Lane County Climate Advisory Committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our passion for education. AOL believes science based, unbiased and factual information that is shared in simple terms that are easy to understand is beneficial for all professions, sectors and practices. That is why AOL **OPPOSES HB 2357**.

As this Committee has heard before, AOL represents nearly 1,000 generational family businesses working daily to steward Oregon forests. These honorable small businesses led by forestry professionals employ more than 22,000 Oregonians who provide sustainable forest management services for Oregon's public and private forestlands, while producing economic stability for their communities and living wage jobs for their employees and families.

AOL's members are a critical link in the forest product supply chain. The forest contracting workforce is comprised of over 17,000 employees in forestry support and transportation; plus an additional 4,500 employees that provide support for contractors, are immigrant workers or are self-employed owner operators. Forestry is their livelihoods and having factual information shared about their profession is necessary for their ability to support their families and communities. Forestry is the workforce that Oregon was built on. The forest sector is a vital part of Oregon's economy and Oregon's forest sector is top in the nation! This sector is one of many that is not only known in the US, but around the world.

### Commodity Commissions

Commodity commissions are typically engaged in marketing and/or research related to a specific commodity. They are funded by producer assessments and vary in size and activity depending on the influence of the commodity to the state due to its production and value. Under the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA), there exists 22 commodity commissions. According to their [website](#), "Commodity commissioners are Oregon public officials who volunteer their time for the economic betterment of the commodity."

The qualifications of these ODA commodity commissions are as follows:

- Oregon resident
- U.S. citizen
- Paid the commodity assessment for at least the three preceding years
- Have an active interest in the positive development and economic growth of the commodity industry in Oregon

OFRI is seen by many as the sector wide commodity commission for forest products and the forestry profession (not just one commodity such as beef and wheat). OFRI was formed in 1991 by the Oregon Legislature in order to ensure the forest products industry would remain viable due to its outsized importance to Oregon's economic viability.

ORS 526.605 states:

*“The State of Oregon recognizes that the forest products industry is one of the largest industries in the state. It provides monetary returns to labor, forestland owners, mill owners and operators, public timber purchasers, timber harvesters, investors and others. It is a source of local and state taxes. It is a major supporter of many secondary businesses that supply goods and services in our communities. The welfare of the state is therefore largely dependent on the health and vigor of the forest products industry. The Oregon Forest Resources Institute’s objectives support this important industry and the wise stewardship of natural resources for the benefit of Oregonians. [1991 c.949 §3; 2003 c.423 §1]”*

According to ORS 526.640, OFRI should:

- 1) *Increase public understanding of the practice of forestry and the use and benefits of forest products.*
- 2) *Support education and cooperative efforts among private forest landowners and within the forest products industry.*
- 3) *Conduct research and help facilitate continued improvement in wood utilization and in secondary wood products manufacturing.*
- 4) *Publish and sell publications and other materials relating to any program or function authorized by ORS 526.600 (Definitions for ORS 526.600 to 526.675) to 526.675 (Oregon Forest Resources Institute Fund).*

OFRI is funded through the forest products harvest tax (privilege tax), aligning its funding mechanism with most other commodity commissions.

Thus, AOL believes OFRI is just as important to the forest sector as the other 22 agriculture commodity commissions in Oregon. OFRI is special however in that it supports an entire profession. OFRI provides factual and science-based education and information for an entire sector, now that is a tall order!

## **The Good Story of Forestry**

OFRI is successful because they utilize scientifically sound information to help educate all Oregonians. It is vitally important to Oregon's economy and green future for everyone to understand that managing forests, while sustainably harvesting timber, and using more wood maximizes Oregon's ability to sequester and store carbon. AOL's members help to harvest approximately 77% of total growth each year to provide wood products that store carbon and provide substitution benefits. [New research](#) shows that sustainably managing and harvesting forests improves carbon sequestration. The best uses of wood provide “carbon negative technology” with the ability to displace fossil fuel emissions. Planting more trees, then walking away is not enough. Forests must be managed to get the largest carbon benefits.

OFRI helps to get the good word about wood to Oregonians and OFRI empowers Oregon's forest sector to help reduce carbon from our atmosphere. Reliable and accurate forest information from OFRI creates

economic incentives to better manage Oregon private forestlands and continue developing innovative technologies.

### **OFRI Succeeds in Their Mandate**

Oregon's forestry professionals and small family forest businesses understand their community responsibility to manage sustainable forests, protect public values like clean air and water, reduce climate change, maintain fish and wildlife habitat, produce wood products and provide a diversity of recreational opportunities. OFRI helps to instill this understanding not just in foresters and students, but in every Oregonian. OFRI promotes the societal obligations we all share for our forests and natural resources.

The publications OFRI develops are used by foresters, loggers, educators, government employees and the general public to help inform decision making. OFRI's data collection is unparalleled and necessary in order to coalesce job counts, production, land ownership and more. Their landowner database is critical.

OFRI also publishes and revises the *Oregon Forest Protection Laws—an Illustrated Manual* which clearly explains how Oregonians are to abide by Oregon's Forest Practices Act and environmental laws. This tool is vital to the success of small forest businesses and woodlands owners who may not have degrees in forest management or policy.

Unfortunately, HB 2357 is being driven by misleading media publications and activist attacks on the whole profession of forestry, not even for a minute recognizing the good work and exceptional success it has had over the years.

### **Conclusion**

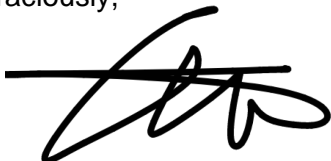
The forest contracting sector relies on the education services that OFRI provides. AOL utilizes OFRI's science-based education to help inform our members about forest management, new technologies and their impacts in Oregon. Oregon is the largest producer of softwood lumber and plywood with carbon savvy engineered wood products gaining steam as well. Our members take pride in the accurate calculations OFRI is able to provide all Oregonians with through their educational services. Many of our members and their employees participated in OFRI sponsored events and activities which helped them decide to get into the forest sector for their profession.

**OFRI provides an unbiased lens to help educate all Oregonians about one of our most influential sectors in the state, all at no cost to the general public.**

AOL **OPPOSES** elimination of this important sector wide commodity commission, OFRI.

Thank you for your consideration of our professional forestry [opposition to HB 2357](#).

Graciously,



Amanda Astor (she/her/hers)

Forest Policy Manager

2015 Madrona Ave SE

Salem, OR 97302

Office: 503.364.1330

PO Box 12339

Salem, Or 97309

Fax: 503.364.0836 | Mobile: 503.983.4017