

Testimony to the Oregon House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources

HB 2357 – March 2, 2021

Chairman Witt and members of the committee, my name is Woody Richen, Vice President and stockholder of Richen Tree Farms, a family business owning 450 acres of forestland in Columbia County and an Oregon Corporation. I want to explain my opposition to HB 2357.

- Oregon Forest Resources Institute does excellent and valuable work.
 - When I testified last week in opposition to HB 2379 which would impose a 5% severance tax, I talked about the 109 truckloads harvested from 25 acres of our property over the last 5 years. The \$1,200 in harvest tax generated by those 109 those loads helps support OFRI, and that is money well spent. OFRI is our commodity commission and receives no general fund money. Its educational efforts help connect urban and rural interests by highlighting the environmental services (clean water, carbon sequestration, recreational opportunities, aesthetics...) provided by forestland. I live in Portland and I believe connecting urban and rural interests is very important. Two OFRI programs are especially noteworthy. First, its Illustrated Manual on Oregon's Forest Protection Laws does an excellent job explaining the science and regulations designed to protect our forests. I use it frequently with friends who are curious about this issue. If OFRI were eliminated as called for by this bill, it is hard to imagine the Oregon Department of Forestry, with all its competing demands, developing a publication of this quality so quickly after changes to the Forest Practices Act. Second, even though our family business has existed for just over 40 years, three generations of family members have been involved in management and a 4th is already becoming active. There is no better educational material on forest issues that will help teach the 3rd and 4th generation the value of Oregon forestlands than what OFRI provides. It puzzles me why anyone would want to eliminate an organization like OFRI that is working very well!
- Could OFRI Improve?
 - Of course it could. What organization, governmental, private, civic, religious, could not benefit from an objective look at its goals and performance? That is why it is important that the Secretary of State's office complete its audit of OFRI which is now underway. Audits such as this have helped many governmental and other organizations improve and I would expect the same outcome here. It seems really wasteful to hijack a normal governmental oversight process and instead rush into changes when the time and space for discussion is so limited.

Thank you for your attention and consideration.