



STARKER
FORESTS, INC.

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March 2, 2021

Chair Witt, Members of House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Opposition to HB 2357

Starker Forests, a fifth-generation family-owned forestland owner in Corvallis, strongly opposes any effort to eliminate or defund the Oregon Forest Resources Institute (OFRI).

Since 1936, Starker forestlands have been sustainability managed to produce wood fiber, while contributing clean water, wildlife habitat and free recreation to the state. Our wood products are sent to over 30 manufacturing facilities in Oregon and we estimate our business contributes over 100 family-wage jobs to the communities in which we operate. We are committed to not only the health of our forests, but also to the health of the forest products sector in Oregon. Additionally, we think it is important for Oregonians to have knowledge about Oregon's forests.

Since 1991, OFRI has served as the commodity commission for the forest products sector in Oregon. Like other commodity commissions, OFRI is grower supported, in both funding and confidence. When OFRI was created, the state recognized the importance of a strong forest products sector. As urban residents make up most of the population of Oregon today, it is as important as ever to keep OFRI whole so that Oregonians can learn more about the forests that make up half our state.

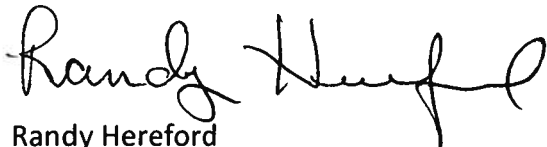
Our public education programs have been in operation for more than three decades. We host fee-free elementary school field trips for schools from Benton, Lincoln, Linn and Polk counties. Many of the schools that visit us are Title I schools and educate students who do not have the opportunity for an interactive, hands-on "in the forest" experience. Between 2015 and 2019, OFRI has paid for bus costs for more than 1,800 students and teachers to visit the Starker Forestry Trail and learn about trees, plants, streams, water, and wildlife habitat. We think it is important for youth to have the opportunity to visit natural places, such as forests, for learning. OFRI is a key partner the help Starker Forests to make this happen.

The high school forestry and natural resource curriculum also is sponsored by OFRI. OFRI's education materials correlate with the Oregon Department of Education statewide standards and is supported for use by teachers. CTE teachers are required to have industry exposure and this professional development support from the industry is invaluable. High school students in CTE programs have a higher graduation rate (over 90% across ethnic backgrounds) than other high school students. The forestry and natural resource curriculum in use at 157 high schools in Oregon is important to support these CTE programs, which provide context to students for real world learning that provides relevance to students who persist in technical subjects.

Workforce recruitment is a challenge in the forest sector. We rely on CTE programs to expose new workers to our field. About 25% of our foresters found their start in forestry in a high school forestry program supported by OFRI. Our forestry professionals have participated in numerous collaborative and science-based forestry education programs facilitated by OFRI. OFRI is known to bring a diverse range of forestry related experts into their professional development courses and conferences, including silviculturists, engineers, wildlife biologists, hydrologists, and soil scientists. OFRI is a valuable resource for over 60,000 Oregonians working in the forest products sector.

Starker Forests supports OFRI and we strongly urge you to vote No on HB 2357. The health of the forest, the forest products sector, and Oregonian's knowledge about our forests depends on it.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Randy Hereford". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Randy Hereford
President/CEO