

Chair Witt and members of the committee, Thank you for this opportunity to comment on HB 2357.

My name is Scott Russell and I live in Columbia County.

I strongly oppose HB 2357 which would eliminate OFRI. OFRI is our communication mechanism to interact with the public about what we do and to communicate with other forest owners. Many non-forest owners are not aware of what we do and provide for our state. OFRI helps to inform the general public of the importance of forests and how to help us preserve the forests. Most of the wild fires are created by humans. Our family lost 160 acres of forest to a human caused fire. A few years ago a fire in the Columbia River Gorge scared one of the state's most scenic and visited areas. The young people who started these fires might not have been so careless if there had been more public presence by OFRI. Now, with last years terrible fires, all of us need to know how to deal with the consequences of the fires.

Funding of OFRI is provided by the harvest taxes we pay, not tax burden on other state tax payers. I understand that Oregon is looking for tax moneys, but to take moneys which wood producers have dedicated to our industry and applying them to other areas is simply wrong.

Thank you for the time to speak.