

Jim James, Testimony Opposing HB 2357 on March 3, 2021

Chair Witt and members of the House Agriculture and Natural Resource Committee

My name is Jim James, a professional forester and I work for the Oregon Small Woodlands Association (OSWA) who testified on March 2nd in opposition of HB 2357 and all bills that make any changes to Oregon Forest Resource Institute (OFRI). Please accept this written testimony as an addition to my March 2nd testimony.

I did provide written testimony that I intended to provide verbally. However, after hearing all the misinformation from not only the sponsor of the bill, but also the three formal presentations from those who spoke in favor of HB 2357. I was appalled by the inaccuracies and outright lies in that testimony about OFRI. It is obvious the catalyst of these positions was media publications that suggested OFRI was not operating within the boundaries it has as a state organization. This is simply not true. This so-called news is full of half truths that the authors chose to, without justification, put a biased slant on the information they had collected. To suggest they know everything about OFRI from emails and their own interpretation of the emails is absurd.

It is hard for me to understand why so much media and others hate the wood products industry and anything associated with it. It is obvious the media works diligently to exaggerate everything it can to disadvantage the wood products industry. Using half-truths and then drawing an inaccurate conclusion is not news, it is a biased opinion that has no place defined as news. The accusations about OFRI in the media is not accurate. The best example is to suggest OFRI is paid for by state taxes, without adding the detail explaining that the Harvest Tax that funds OFRI is a voluntary tax paid only for owners of timber that is harvested. By intentionally leaving out this detail the media intentionally tried to leave the readers with the impression that Oregon tax payers were paying for OFRI and therefore that is unfair. The way it is done is not unfair. Although some may technically say it is accurate, as presented the entire impression is a lie. The media information about OFRI is full of these types of misrepresentations. There is no way this is an accident. It is intentional and reflects an obvious bias. Members of the committee, please do not be influenced by a group of organizations use lies and misinformation to attack the wood products industry. It is not accurate or justified.

I have tried to rationalize why would these groups hate the wood products industry so much. A very important industry in Oregon that provides renewable building materials, industry jobs so important to Rural Oregon, and revenue to Oregon. These products are used in Oregon and all over the United States.

I am sure you know, Oregon's land use laws mandate lands zoned as forestland must be maintained as forests with some minor options to convert to agricultural land. By

statute, the purpose of Oregon's private forests is to grow and harvest trees in a manner that also protects public values found in private forests. I have been a professional forester for almost 50 years, I began my career in 1970 before the Oregon Forest Practices Act (FPA) was passed and I have observed all the changes in Oregon's FPA, all following the science of forestry. I am proud of all the changes made over time. All changes were made following the best available science like the statutes require. You heard statements that the FPA fails to address public values. Not true. You also heard Oregon's forest practices are not as good as neighboring states. Also, not true, if one focuses on science-based forest policy. Oregon does an outstanding job. Forest policy in neighboring states is not driven by forest science alone, but instead with a heavy dose of political science. To suggest they are better than Oregon is a false statement. To say they are different is the only true statement. You heard statements about how bad water quality is from Oregon forests. Another lie. Oregon's forest provides the best water quality in the state. You heard a statement about the Bull Run Watershed suggesting the practices there were required to have good water quality. There are a lot of factors that influenced that decision, and political science was one of them.

You heard that OFRI has attacked peer reviewed science and there is testimony that may have led you to believe that all peer reviewed science is perfect and should not be challenged. To understand peer reviewed science, one must first understand the peer reviewed science process. A scientist develops a theory and then sets out to clarify if scientific study can confirm theory. The peer review of the science focuses on the theory. Any scientist has control over what the theory is and how to prove it. They have the option to ignore some factors and put emphasis on others. The peer review of the science is based entirely on what the theory proved, not any other factors. Being peer reviewed is the gold standard, but that does not mean it is without question. OFRI did develop a paper on Forest Carbon inline with its purpose to exist. It fairly addressed the entire Forest Carbon Issue using peer reviewed information. If someone is offended because there is other peer reviewed science that differs from the science they prefer to believe, it is not reasonable for them to claim the information discredits their science, only that there are different points of view on what the science is. To suggest peer reviewed science is perfect and should never be challenged is offensive to anyone who understands how science is created.

There is only one conclusion I can draw from the fact that environmental organizations want to get rid of OFRI. The factual and honest messages from OFRI's educational efforts do not align with the misleading and inaccurate messaging from some environmental organizations who seem to have no standard to tell the entire and complete truth. Like the news media, half-truths with misleading conclusions are in their consistent rhetoric about forestry in Oregon. It is in their best interest to convince the public that the sky is falling and therefore the public must support them financially to save everything. Anyone who does not understand forestry can easily be convinced to support their efforts. OFRI provides honest and scientifically based information to

educate the public about forestry in Oregon by telling the truth, something some environmental organizations seem to dislike.

That is why forest owners pay a voluntary Harvest Tax to fund OFRI as a Commodity Commission. Forest owners are proud of the honesty and high ethical standards OFRI uses. And that is why some in the environmental community are opposed to it. The Secretary of State audit will prove OFRI has operated within its guidelines. The legislature should not take any action on HB 2357 until the real truth about OFRI is known.

I plead with the House Agriculture and Natural Resource Committee to not move HB 2357 or any other bills that reduces OFRI's ability to function so successfully as it has for the last 30 years for the public's benefit. Any such bills are without merit.

Thank you for the opportunity to add to my testimony. I do appreciate all the hard work members of the legislature put into your responsibility to get things right. Please do not be sucked into the irresponsible reporting about OFRI. OFRI has done nothing wrong and has acted well within their guidelines as outlined in statutes. The money that funds OFRI is at the discretion of those who pay it. I question, should anyone intentionally interfere with forest owners who voluntarily fund a Commodity Commission that tells the truth about forestry in Oregon. I think not.