



**Testimony before the House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources
House Bill 2663 - relating to Sudden Oak Death
March 16, 2021**

Chair Witt, Vice-Chairs Hudson and Breese-Iverson, members of the committee,

We urge you to support and pass House Bill 2663, appropriating \$1.7 million in General Funds to the Oregon Department of Forestry for the 2021-23 biennium to combat Sudden Oak Death. Without these funds, Oregon could see the Sudden Oak Death pandemic spread throughout the state.

Sudden Oak Death aka *Phytophthora ramorum*

Phytophthora ramorum, the pathogen that causes the plant disease popularly referred to as Sudden Oak Death, (SOD) is a serious issue for Oregon's growers of nursery and greenhouse plants, timber, and Christmas trees. *P. ramorum* was first found in Oregon in 2003. As a result of that discovery, the Oregon Department of Agriculture, with industry support, launched a comprehensive surveillance program to look for the pathogen. In 2004, the pathogen was detected in 23 nurseries, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture imposed quarantine regulations for Oregon, Washington and California.

Collaboration and outcomes

It is critical to keep Sudden Oak Death at bay in Oregon – and funding for local efforts is key. The forestry sector is as complex as the nursery industry, and it takes resources, science and collaboration between local, state and federal agencies to succeed. Many of us have been engaged for a number of years with US Senator Jeff Merkley and State Representative David Brock Smith to bring the best minds together to provide tangible mitigation strategies on this disease.

Getting it right matters. The OAN worked with the Oregon Department of Agriculture and the USDA Animal Plant Health & Inspection Service (USDA-APHIS) to create a model regulatory effort that rewards clean operators and provides much needed assistance to those operations that test positive for SOD. More than 97% of nursery operations in the country are shipping clean plants.

In 2008, the OAN, Oregon Forest Industries Council, Oregon Farm Bureau Federation, Oregon Small Woodlands Association as well as The Nature Conservancy came together to address a Sudden Oak Death outbreak. The groups worked with the Oregon State Legislature to allocate emergency funding of \$427,500 for control and eradication efforts in Curry County. This money was critical to prevent even higher loss of product and helped stem the disease.

House Bill 2663 deserves support

The appropriation of dollars to the State Forestry Department for the next biennium is needed to carry out integrated pest management programs to combat Sudden Oak Death. The task force, led by State Representative David Brock Smith and United States Senator Jeff Merkley, will set the stage for significant movement toward a more systematic approach to dealing with this issue and dollars allocated will be proven to be a wise investment. The loss of market access will far exceed the \$1.7 million allocation and we urge the committee to take the long view on this important issue.

Our state is not defined by its problems and challenges, but its solutions. What matters is how we address issues, seek collaboration, and achieve positive outcomes. That is why we support this bill. House Bill 2663 helps with the issues facing forestry through an appropriate allocation of dollars and creating a long-lasting solution to Sudden Oak Death. It deserves your support.

Thank you for your time and attention.

The Oregon Association of Nurseries
Associated Oregon Loggers
Association of Oregon Counties
Rayonier
Oregonians for Food and Shelter
Oregon Cattlemen's Association
Oregon Forest & Industries Council
Oregon Small Woodlands Association