

Thank you for the opportunity to express my support for HB 2594.

I am a small woodland owner in Corbett, Oregon. I am the person who the Corbett Water District manager called when one of the two intakes for Corbett's domestic water supply was devastated by a logging operation. Why me? That is what I asked. Gordon Creek, the stream which supplies Corbett's water, crosses my property. As a volunteer, I monitor stream temperature, in conjunction with the Portland Water Bureau's fish biologist, and with the Corbett Water District. Because of what I have witnessed on the industrial timberlands which border my property, I have fought for better riparian protections than are provided under the Oregon Forest Practices Act. I serve on the Northwest Regional Forest Practices Committee, so people associate me with forestry and assume I have some official power, which I do not. I suggested that the water district manager call the ODF stewardship forester, but he declined "because they never do anything when I call." In defense of ODF, they never do anything because usually no rules have been broken, even though the results of forest practices can be devastating to streams. So I went with the manager to assess the damage. Indeed the timber company had logged down to the 20 ft no-cut line, which leaves a stream buffer only one to two trees wide, and as always happens in our area, these trees are without the root structure to stand alone, and many go down on the first windy day. In this case many of the trees went down into the intake area. I told him he needed to have the stewardship forester calculate whether the basal area requirements had been met, to confirm that the harvest was fully legal, but I suspected no rules had been broken. The problem is the inadequate rules. It turned out to be perfectly legal to do this damage to the Corbett water intake.

The inadequate protection of streams is not the only problem for domestic water supply watersheds. Cutting down so many of the trees in the watershed which provides the water for Gordon Creek, and replanting with seedlings which have a higher water demand than the big trees which were clearcut, also reduces stream flow. Gordon Creek now will be inadequate to supply the Corbett customers, and an expensive well will be needed to supplement the stream water supply. It will be many years before these seedlings are mature trees, with less intense water demand, and shade-providing canopy, and then they will be clearcut again.

The Oregon Forest Practices Act provides little protection for domestic water supplies. There are no rules about what percent of a watershed providing a domestic water supply can be left without mature trees. Compare how the Bull Run watershed is treated: no logging, very little human entry, pristine old forest. It is carefully protected so it provides healthy water for the greater Portland area. Why do our smaller domestic water systems merit so little protection? It usually comes down to money, but again compare the cost of an expensive well system to the money lost by leaving more trees unharvested, and compare who is paying the cost.

As climate change progress, our domestic water supplies will be progressively threatened, and protecting our water both for domestic use and for riparian habitat will be ever more crucial. Unfortunately the OFRI message of Oregon's sustainable forestry practices and our excellent riparian protections under the Forest Practices Act has led most Oregonians to believe all is well with our streams and our water supplies. It is time to deal with the reality of the threats to our domestic water supplies. I urge you to support this bill.

Respectfully,
Candace Bonner, MD, MPH
Corbett, Oregon