

March 17, 2021

Opposition to SB335 as Amended

Chair Golden and Committee Members,

My name is Gordon Culbertson, a resident of Lane County. Our family business owns and tends small forest parcels, totaling several hundred acres. We are actively engaged in growing and harvesting commercial timber.

In 2019 our family was recognized as Oregon State Tree Farmers of the year by the Oregon and American Tree Farm System. We have been acknowledged for sustainable timber management, water quality protection, wildlife habitat creation and control of invasive plant species. One of the things we are most proud of is succession and passing our resource heritage along to future generations.

We collaborate with local Stewardship Foresters from the Oregon Department of Forestry on forest operations. For example, cooperative efforts under the guidance of the Oregon Forest Practices Act helps assure protections on buffering fish streams during harvest operations. Local partnerships are invaluable to promote resource protection.

SB 335 includes several amendments that will very negatively affect forestry in Oregon.

Regional Forest Practice Committees have served an important role in developing important regulatory changes designed to improve Oregon's Forest Practices Act from a scientific perspective. The RFP committees support resource protection and should be maintained. The shared expertise and knowledge on forest health, fuels and fire management are crucial as wildfire has become a statewide concern. This regional emphasis recognizes important geography and climate differences across the state. Dry forests in Southern Oregon are not the same and have differing attributes than our coastal forests in Lane County. **A "one-size fits all" approach that does not recognize history, institutional knowledge and local expertise is not effective or enlightened forest management.**

Weakening the role of Oregon's Board of Forestry is disruptive and distracting from the very real crisis of forest health, climate and wildfire. Forestry expertise in policy decisions on these crucial issues should be welcomed rather than discouraged. Making Oregon's State Forester a political appointment is divisive and not a constructive change. The Governor does not have expertise in forestry. The Board of Forestry has a wide view and knowledge from various perspectives. Our State Forester has traditionally been a renowned career professional known for stability and extensive statewide experience. **To replace a well-qualified individual of this stature with a political operative is a travesty.**

I have deep concerns about SB 335 and its intent. Cooked into SB 335 seems to be a narrative of bias and prejudice against commercial forestry and foresters. There are many aspects that are clearly exclusionary and reject local input from those that should be "partners" rather than perceived "adversaries".

Would it be reasonable that the Oregon Medical Board exclude physicians and nurses? Would it be prudent the Board of Education exclude educators or teacher's union activists based on their expressed self-interest? I think both examples would be wrong and expect most Oregonians would agree. Foresters I know have a deep respect for our natural resources and much to contribute. The forestry career I selected is not just a job, but a lifestyle. Excluding forest professionals only serves to deepen the "rural versus urban divide".

SB 335 is bad public policy that will be detrimental to Oregon's forest environment. Three generations of our family urge its opposition.

Sincerely,
Gordon Culbertson
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