

As a professional forester in the State of Oregon, I vehemently oppose any reduction in Board of Forestry members with professional forestry experience from three to two. The presence of industrial forest representatives on the Board in the current composition is vital to maintaining the support and perspective of the many small towns and local economies dependent on the variety of forest products Oregon produces. Reducing the number of forest industry representatives from three to two clearly opens the door for anti-science and anti-management influences, which would negatively impact rural communities that live and work in Oregon's many forests.

Additionally, the appointment of the State Forester should absolutely not be placed in the hands of a single, politically driven individual such as the Governor. The selection and appointment of the Oregon State Forester by the Oregon Board of Forestry ensures candidates are selected based on a variety of diverse views, rather than a single politically-influenced perspective. Given the enormous importance and influence of the State Forester, it is critical that any individual filling that role be selected to represent many interests across Oregon, and not be beholden to single powerful political influencer, such as the Governor.

Furthermore, all three Regional Forest Practices Committees should absolutely be maintained rather than eliminated, due to the diverse and valuable regional perspectives and valuable practical forestry knowledge they contribute to the Board of Forestry towards decision making and policy development. The loss of these important Committees would result in a less-informed Board and less genuine scientific and practical forestry knowledge being generated to assist policy makers in developing forestry-related laws and guidance. Policies and statutes should be based on science and actual provable observations in Oregon, rather than emotionally-driven or politically-biased propaganda from in and outside of Oregon.

I am extremely disturbed that what was originally a study bill has been amended at the last minute to include proposal of extreme change such as changing the composition of the Board of Forestry, making selection and appointment of the State Forester the sole provenance of the Governor, and elimination the Regional Forest Practice Committees. Such radical and short-notice concepts should never be tacked on last minute to an essentially un-related bill, and without sufficient time for those impacted by the proposals to respond.

Many of the proposals now added to the original SB 335 were already attempted in previous sessions, and were set aside when the Private Forestry Accord was approved in 2020. The attempt to sneak them in last minute in SB 335 is disingenuous at best, and Machiavellian at worst. At a time when national, regional, and local trust in government is at a historic low due to the chaos of the past year from pandemic and election stresses, the Oregon Legislature should be demonstrating a commitment to open and honest policy development, not closed door, underhanded shenanigans such as this. If there is to be any hope of rebuilding public faith in our systems of government, those systems must not succumb to special interests nor bend to bias.

Please remove any proposals to reduce the Board of Forestry composition of industrial representatives from three to two, any proposals to empower only the Governor to select and appoint the State Forester, and any proposals the eliminate the Regional Forest Practices Committees. These systems are functioning successfully and efficiently as designed, and there are no pressing issues or deficiencies in their operation requiring elimination or alterations at this time. There are far more pressing issues for the Legislature to address, such as wildland fire prevention, housing shortages, homelessness, etc.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Sara Stack