

NO on HB 2379

While 2020 was a most unusual year for wildfires, this bill tries to burden private forestry harvests for the cost of fighting all wildfires across the state. He ignored the fact that;

-96% of the fires start on public land

-the drastic reduction in Federal harvests since 1990, have led to huge fuel loads in unmanaged lands and coupled with the lack of well maintained roads, have led to explosive fire conditions on public lands. The extremely low taxes/fee paid by the Federal forests should be cause for alarm. Where's the equity to Oregon taxpayers, when the state's largest landowner pays almost nothing for its millions of acres of forestland.

-government policy and decisions have cause firefighters to "watch" Beachie Creek fire in the upper Santiam canyon while it was very small and could have easily been put out. It also led to firefighters at the Echo Mountain fire near Otis decide to watch and "let it burn itself out" while it was also very small. These small fires and others could have been quickly extinguished, but instead exploded with strong winds, resulting in horrendous losses. Will there be any accountability for the policies and decisions that led to these losses?

The question was asked; How can a small woodland owner survive in todays setting? My answer is that its very difficult when you can't find a logger in peak markets and at best, you have to settle for harvests in average markets. Our costs continue to rise, and we don't have the economies of scale to pay for suitable harvesting equipment to do harvests ourselves or for the bulk purchase of seedlings and materials.

The 25 Mbf exclusion for "Ma & Pa" landowners might sound accommodating to small woodland owners, but in fact, typical small woodland owners can't afford to mobilize a logger for such a small harvest, and thus typically space out harvests every 5 or 10 years. To be truly meaningful, such an exclusion should be for an average of 25Mbf/yr based on the previous 5 or 10 year average.

Rep. Holvey's comparison of Oregon and Washington harvest tax rates was over simplified, as it ignores their respective differences in tax structures, property tax, corporate taxes, income taxes, and CAT (corporate activity tax), as well as the different wildfire costs and relative presence of inactive landowners, such as the Federal Government. One should wait until most of these issues are considered in ODF's ongoing fire study, before attempting to compare Washington and Oregon harvest taxes. We should remember that increases in taxes will only lead to higher prices for all forest products, including the lumber that goes into housing, making housing even less affordable.

Please vote no on HB 2379