



STARKER
FORESTS, INC.

www.starkerforests.com 541-929-2477 (office)
7240 SW Philomath Blvd. | Corvallis, OR 97333
PO Box 809 | Corvallis, OR 97339

April 8, 2021
Representative Nancy Nathanson, Chair
House Committee on Revenue
900 Court St. NE H-279
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Starker Forests Opposes HB 2379

Chair Nathanson and members of the Committee,

Starker Forests opposes HB 2379, the addition of a forest products severance tax, and any adjustments to the current funding, mission, and organization of the Oregon Forest Resources Institute. Starker Forests is an 85-year-old, fifth-generation family-owned forestland owner committed to sustainable management of forestlands.

HB 2379 defunds OFRI. In the same way that the over twenty other Oregon commodity commissions serve their growers through a self-imposed tax or assessment, OFRI serves the entire forest sector by educating landowners, forest workers, and the public about all things related to forests in Oregon. OFRI materials, tours, meetings, and conferences include information on management of all Oregon's forests; private and public, eastside and westside.

As you know, OFRI receives no general fund dollars. Just a few weeks ago, a Lincoln County commissioner told us that she thinks industries have a right to tax themselves and educate the public about what they do. That's what OFRI does, and it fulfills its mission in the same ways that any other commodity commission or checkoff program would.

Starker Forests offers forest education field trips to elementary school students in Lincoln, Benton and Linn Counties. The forest is a fantastic classroom, and OFRI's bus reimbursement program brings equity to low-income elementary schools throughout Oregon by providing access to all schools and teachers.

OFRI materials are correlated with statewide learning standards throughout all levels of K-12. The Oregon Department of Education is a partner with OFRI and the important high school forestry and natural resources curriculum, where career and technical education provides not only higher graduation rates, but provides high schoolers with the academic and technical skills, knowledge, and training necessary to succeed in future careers and to become lifelong learners.

In addition, we oppose HB 2379 for its proposal to institute a severance tax on forest products. The forest products sector already pays a variety of taxes. Forest landowners are taxed like all other landowners in Oregon and timber is taxed like all other crops. Oregon's forest sector pays more than 1.5 times more taxes than most Oregon businesses. While the fire protection system in Oregon is complicated, we are active participants and contributors to Oregon's Complete and Coordinated system for fire protection, and we believe the current system works well.

The forest products sector in Oregon works as a family unit, from planting trees to milling logs, to providing the state of Oregon with benefits such as employment for 60,000 workers, important wood products needed for housing, recreation, clean water, and wildlife habitat. As our grower supported commodity commission, OFRI serves Oregon well and we oppose any effort to change the structure or funding of the Oregon Forest Resources Institute.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment,

Jennifer Beathe
Forester and Outreach Manager
Starker Forests, Inc.