

May 10, 2021

House Revenue Committee

RE: HB 2357

Chair Representative Nathanson, Vice Chairs Representatives Pham and Reschke and members of the committee,

My name is Mike Barsotti. I am a family forest landowner in the Lyons area, and an Oregon Department of Forestry retiree. I have spent 45 years working to improve the health of Oregon's family forestlands. To be assured that my forest is being managed properly, it is certified under the internationally recognized American Tree Farm System's Standards of Sustainability. I utilize Oregon Forest Resources Institute (OFRI) workshops, tours and publication in meeting these Standards of Sustainability

I am opposed to the A-Engrossed House Bill 2357.

OFRI is the forest community's commodity commission and is funded solely by forest landowners through the Oregon Forest Harvest Tax. It has been very effective in promoting forest products, such as mass timber buildings; providing forest management education to family forest landowners through workshop tours and publication; and providing educational opportunities for school age children. Much of OFRI successes come from the many partnerships it has developed with agencies and organizations that share the goal of healthy, productive working forests in Oregon.

This bill hinders and/or eliminates OFRI's ability to promote forest products and education for the state's forest landowners and its citizens. It also directs the Department of Forestry (ODF) to do what it is already is doing, or to take on tasks it is ill equipped to accomplish.

For example, ODF already promote forest health, and regulates/monitors the use of pesticides in forests and supports the Board of Forestry's Committee for Family Forestlands.

In addition, the bill directing ODF to take on tasks using vague terms can only lead to confusion. I cannot find anything near a agreement on the definition of "adaptive resource management" or "conservation perspective"; two terms used in this bill.

The USDA-FS General Technical Report, PNW-GTR-654, by Stankey, Clark, Bormann states in its conclusion that although the concept of adaptive management is widely acclaimed in the literature as a model for resource management, it remains primarily an ideal rather than a demonstrated reality." The term "conservation perspective" does not have a single agreed upon definition.

Beyond the vagueness of some terms used in this bill:

- ODF is not a research agency. ODF oversees the implementation of, not the development of forest policy. The Oregon Forest Practices Act is defined in statute with rules promulgated by the Board of Forestry. Advancing climate science as it relates to forest management as prescribed in this bill should be the role of research institutions. The legislature, not ODF, sets forest related climate policy.

- This bill proposes to change, without a comprehensive review, public policy that was developed in the 1970s regarding the education of family forest landowner. There needs to be a consensus of all agencies and organizations that assist family forestland before making such a major shift in Oregon policy. ODF's educational role is the one-on-one with landowners through its field foresters. OFRI and others such as OSU Extension provide the classroom, workshop and media types of education.

There exists a Partnership for Forest Education which both OFRI and ODF are members. OFRI played the key role in establishing this group. This group jointly identifies family forestland educational needs and how best to move them forward. Nothing will be gained and much will be lost if ODF is charged with taking the lead.

ODF's Private Forest Division has an existing funding structure defined in statute. Creating a new landowner funded income stream via the Harvest Tax without thoroughly vetting the concept is poor public policy at best.

And finally, the Secretary of State's audit should be a foundational piece if there needs to be clarification on how the forest community's commodity commission operates; and hopefully, if after reviewing the SOS's audit, the legislature sees a need to clarify how OFRI functions, it will consider how other commodity commissions are defined in setting guidance for OFRI.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony to this bill. I ask you to reject it.