

Oregon Legislature
House Committee on Revenue
May 10, 2021
Testimony of Cindy Deacon Williams

Chair Nathanson and members of the House Committee on Revenue, my name is Cindy Deacon Williams. I served on the Board of Forestry for nine years, from 2012 to 2020. I come today to testify in support of HB 2357A.

Securing adequate funding for the Department of Forestry to responsibly manage Oregon's forests was a serious challenge for the entirety of my Board service. It limited the department's ability to provide adequate support to forestland owners in planning sustainable forest operations. This service shortcoming particularly impacted small and family forestland owners who often rely heavily on technical expertise of department staff. The department's 51 Stewardship Foresters do an incredible job, but they are stretched too thin.

Funding limitations also severely curtailed the department's ability to monitor compliance with, and evaluate effectiveness of, the Forest Practices Act. We often didn't have the information needed to know whether our rules were consistently being followed, or to determine if the rules – even if followed – were capable of achieving our aims. Sparse effectiveness monitoring information for southwestern Oregon meant the Board was unable to determine whether existing rules met Clean Water Act obligations in the Siskiyou region. We had to rely on legislative intervention to proceed with rulemaking. Now, the department lacks adequate funding to evaluate the effectiveness of stream rules in eastern Oregon. The Department's current 5 FTEs dedicated to statewide monitoring clearly are inadequate.

The most obvious pressing issues looming over management of Oregon's forests result from the impacts of climate change. Despite strong and unified expressions of concern by the Board of Forestry, funding limitations have hamstrung the Department's effort to rise to these critical science and policy challenges.

I strongly encourage the Committee to pass HB 2357A. It will help ensure that public dollars will be raised and expended for the best and highest use. I commend what Representative Salinas has developed to address some of the very real problems hindering our ability to sustainably manage Oregon's forests.