

Dear members of the House Committee on Revenue:

My name is Kate McMichael. My wife and I live in Lane County. I am submitting this letter as testimony in opposition to HB 2357.

As stated in previous testimony against an earlier iteration of this bill, my wife and I are new woodland owners. After years of retirement saving and dreaming, in 2019 we were able to purchase a small forest property in Vida. From years of backpacking and hiking, we knew that we loved mountains and forests, but we knew next to nothing about what caring for a forest might look like—or, indeed, what might be expected of us as new woodland owners.

Thank goodness—and the Oregon legislature in 1991—for OFRI. Even before the Extension, OFRI was one of the first discoveries we made. Funded by harvest tax dollars, OFRI is free to all who want to learn about Oregon forests. We marveled at the wealth of resources available at the click of a button: find your ODF stewardship forester; learn about Oregon's Forest Practice Rules; learn about the trees in your forest; learn about threats to tree health; learn about management options for diversity and resilience, for wildlife and watersheds, for carbon sequestration and storage. Although overwhelmed by the options at first, ultimately OFRI allowed us to feel that we might be up to the challenge of successfully thinking through those options and determining objectives that matched our values, so that we might actually end up managing—for health and diversity and wildlife and watersheds and carbon sequestration and storage—rather than damaging our forest.

From the plethora of resources available through the website to the invaluable array of partnerships that it contributes to and supports—the Partnership for Forestry Education key among them, OFRI has made it possible for our learning to continue even through the pandemic, with TreeSchool Online. Afters hours of logging on and taking notes and reading and discussing, we are beginning to feel forest literate.

As former educators, we have appreciated the non-biased, science-based approach of OFRI, from resources to workshops. Even when we might have wanted someone to tell us what to do, the consistent OFRI refrain is “it depends on your management objectives.” To harvest or not harvest, to manage for carbon sequestration and storage—or for habitat or biodiversity or fire recovery or simply a resilient, healthy forest to hand on to future generations—OFRI is there to provide pointers to information, not a blueprint, not arguing on behalf of any particular constituency other than Oregon's forests themselves.

For 30 years, Oregonians have turned to OFRI for facts and education about the careful management of our forests and the strict environmental protection laws that maintain wildlife habitat, clean air and water. Funded and governed exclusively by forestry professionals, OFRI provides education resources for more than 170,000 Oregon school children annually, including nearly \$100,000 in reimbursements for forestry field trip transportation costs that enable over 25,000 students to visit our forests.

Without OFRI and all the forest literacy efforts it supports, the two of us—and Oregon overall—would be lost, victims of the agendas of other interest groups who have more invested in “winning” the argument, even as Oregonians are divided more and more amongst ourselves, than in insuring a beautiful, fire resilient, healthy forested Oregon for generations to come. In the midst of the polarized and polarizing whirlwind that characterizes the forestry “conversation” in Oregon, OFRI is a reliable, calm, vital center. While it is the forest sector's commodity commission, funded by harvest taxes, OFRI's mission is forest literacy for all

Oregonians; its constituency is Oregon's forests. The fact that OFRI's existence is even in question is indicative of how very much we need it.

This bill is driven by special interest groups who want to hijack Oregon's forestry education organization, swiping money away from our children's education and Oregon's forests and forest steward/owners to promote their one-sided agenda. If those groups want to create their own propaganda, they should have to pay for it themselves.

Now, more than ever, Oregonians deserve sound science and reliable facts. Please reject HB 2357.

Thank you for taking the time to read and consider this testimony.

Kate McMichael  
Vida, OR

member: Oregon Small Woodlands Association & Oregon Women in Timber