



# Coos-Curry County Farm Bureau

87518 Davis Creek Lane, Bandon, Oregon 97411

February 18, 2021

Chairman Brad Witt and Committee members:  
House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee

**RE: No on new timber taxes – House Bills 2379, 2598, & 2389**

Chairman Witt and Members of the Committee:

I'm writing to you on behalf of Coos-Curry County Farm Bureau to encourage you to vote NO on HB 2379, HB 2598 and HB 2389 that raise taxes on the timber industry. Most of the Coos-Curry County Farm Bureau Board members and their families are timber land owners.

I am a forester in Bandon and our organization (CCFB) is deeply concerned about these bills. I have worked in Alaska, Washington, Oregon and California. I am a registered professional forester (RPF) in California Lic. #2946, a local director of Oregon Small Woodlands Association (OSWA), Vice-President with the Association of Consulting Foresters (ACF) Oregon chapter, Certified Tree Farm Inspector (ATFS) and a member of the Southwest Regional Forest Practice Committee (SWRFPC).

These bills directly hurt many private landowners on the wake of a fire season that taught us we need to be proactive not just reactive. Given the destruction we saw in 2020 now is the time when we should be focusing on two things, educating and assisting small landowners. HBs 2379 & 2380 directly hurt private landowners and could potentially raise their taxes 800-1000%. This unreasonable increase takes money which could be used for reforestation and vegetation management. Helping private landowners needs to be a priority in all areas whether it is by reforestation in the fire areas or by fuels reduction in areas that are at risk. These bills would take money directly from private landowners that could use the money to be proactive in preventing forest fires or their severity. HB 2598 would be a huge blow to the education of private landowners as well as everyone else who has used OFRI publications as a resource. I myself used OFRI all through my time at Oregon State University where I received a degree in Forest Engineering. The first place students looked when preparing reports for classes across multiple disciplines were the OFRI publications in the Peavy Hall engineering lab. Private landowners also need OFRI as a resource to help them understand what options are available as a steward of the land and how those decisions affect their property for generations to come. These bills not only kicks private landowners when they're down but it also hurts a major resource that teaches them how to get back up.

Now is the worst possible time for a new timber tax. Rural communities cannot afford another tax. Timber jobs and businesses are the economic backbone of rural Oregon – the industry provides over 60,000 family wage jobs in Oregon, mostly in rural communities. In 2020, these communities have endured massive layoffs and the worst wildfires in Oregon history and are struggling to recover and rebuild. A new tax on timber will eliminate jobs and businesses in rural communities that are already suffering multiple extreme hardships. That’s why 64% of Oregonians oppose new taxes and regulations on businesses struggling to recover from the economic devastation of the pandemic. A large increase in taxes and a decrease in educational resources would encourage many small private landowners to sell off forestland that has been in their families for generations. Our focus should remain on restoring hundreds of thousands of acres of burned forests back to healthy, thriving forests that prevent future fires, protect water quality, and capture and store carbon – NOT taxing the very people doing that work.

Finally, keeping forests as forests is in the best interest of all Oregonians, and our current tax and land use systems work together to encourage forestland is maintained in Oregon and not lost to conversion like has happened in our neighboring states. Since 1907, Oregon has maintained 94% of its forestland area, whereas Washington and California have lost over 15% of their forestland to development. Reinstating a severance tax encourages conversion of forestland to other uses (residential, industrial, agricultural) that do not provide environmental benefits like carbon capture and storage, wildlife habitat, clean water, and recreation. Severance taxes are for “severed resources” like coal and crude oil, not a crop that is planted and cultivated over time. State law requires harvested timber be replanted – on average four trees are planted for every one that is harvested.

Coos-Curry County Farm Bureau urges you to please vote no on these detrimental bills. Piling on new taxes to the communities devastated by the wildfires who are trying to recover and do restoration work won’t bring our forests back.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Respectfully,



Garrett Kleiner, Board member  
Coos-Curry County Farm Bureau