

During my 28 years of work as a professional forester in western Oregon, besides helping get millions of trees planted, one of the most valuable things I feel I worked at was sharing my knowledge and love of forests--and all the resources they contain. I am constantly amazed at how many Oregon residents know so little about the forests that surround us and provide us with so much.

The Oregon Forest Resources Institute (OFRI) was created 1991 by the legislature to serve the same role that 20 Oregon grower-funded commodity commissions serve for products such as blueberries and wine. As one of the largest industries in the state and a source of tens of thousands of family-wage jobs, lawmakers recognized then—and hopefully still—that helping students, forest landowners themselves, and members of the public better understand our forests is very important. That is what OFRI does—with its funding coming directly from a tax on those who harvest timber.

I have been directly involved for more than 25 years with Forest Field Day programs in Lane County, sponsored by Forests Today and Forever, which bring middle school student out to nearby forests to explore recreation, soil, timber, water and wildlife. OFRI has provided funding for the buses that bring these student to the forest, where they experience, first-hand, how natural resource professionals work to both use and protect these resources. I continue to volunteer with this program in my retirement years. Hearing the enthusiasm of the students and the appreciation of their teachers for these field trips reinforces their value. They probably would not be able to continue without the support of OFRI.

This is just one of many examples of OFRI's contribution—not just to the forestry community, but to all Oregonians. It is important work and needs to continue. Please don't let OFRI be shuttered.