

To: Chair Witt and Members of Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee
From: KB Mercer
Date: March 2, 2021
Re: HB 2357 – Eliminate Funding for OFRI

I urge you to cease funding OFRI, which has been working in direct opposition to the intent of its founding purpose. Budget cuts are needed now anyway, and the funds can be directed to much more valuable purposes, like funding fire resiliency in rural communities and protection of water supply watersheds.

Last year OPB/The Oregonian published articles that made clear that the Oregon Forest Resources Institute has “acted as a public relations agency and lobbying arm for Oregon’s timber industry.” This means that our hard-earned tax dollars are being used in ways counter to the founding purpose of OFRI; that, in fact, our public money is being used to fool the public into believing that the timber industry delivers only benefits to our state when in fact that industry is directly responsible for terrible harms. Very recently we learned of how clearcutting of the watershed that provides water to Corbett has resulted in grave threats to their future drinking water.

I urge you to stop funding OFRI and to redirect those funds to other purposes. We can no longer allow OFRI to continue to:

- Promote business as usual, intensive forest management.
- Engage in political activity in violation of its charter, including criticizing OSU research that documented how this intensive logging has greatly reduced carbon stores.
- Spend over \$1 million annually promoting Oregon’s logging laws as strong even though they are much weaker than our neighboring states.
- Downplay serious harms caused to drinking water by numerous rural communities as a result of intensive logging practices on private lands.

Sincerely,

KB Mercer
10811 SE Schiller St.
Portland, OR 97206
kb@travelnglantern.com