

February 24, 2021

House Committee on Agriculture & Natural Resources:

Rep. Brad Witt Office, Chair
Rep. Vikki Breese-Iverson, Vice Chair
Rep. Zach Hudson, Vice Chair
Rep. Jami Cate, Member
Rep. Pam Marsh, Member
Rep. Susan McLain, Member
Rep. Bill Post, Member
Rep. Jeff Reardon, Member
Rep. David Brock Smith, Member
Rep. Anna Williams, Member

Re: **Opposition to House Bill HB 2357**

Dear Chair Witt and Members of the Committee:

We request that this letter be entered into the public record on this matter. We are opposed to HB 2357. As we understand it, House Bill 2357 will eliminate the Oregon Forest Resources Institute (OFRI), which would appear to be a “knee-jerk” reaction to recent negative publicity about it.

First, a little background about us. My wife and I are constituents of Rep. Anna Williams, who is a member of this committee. We are retired, and we own and manage about 84 acres of forestland in western Oregon near Estacada, which we have been doing for almost 30 years. We are proud of our forest stewardship, and we were honored for our work in 2020 as the Clackamas County Farm Forestry Association’s Woodland Farmer of the Year. We received this honor not on account of how efficiently we can produce a forest crop, or how well we can log a forest stand; we were awarded this honor on account of our forest sustainability practices, fish habitat restoration efforts, and educational services we present on our property to students of all ages about healthy streams and forests. We actively manage our forest for many requirements and uses, ranging from infrequent timber harvesting to wildlife habitat enhancements, recreation and riparian (relating to or situated on or near the banks of a river) restoration.

We are constantly seeking new information to follow best management practices regarding the stewardship of our forestland. For this information we rely upon organizations such as the OSU Extension Service, Clackamas Soil & Water Conservation District, the Oregon Department of Forestry, the Natural Resources Conservation Service and OFRI, in addition to academic research papers. No one organization is the sole purveyor of the knowledge necessary for us to be effective forestland managers.

We view OFRI as an informational resource. Much of their information is free to the public. We support most of their informational activities. OFRI produces a number of professional, well-written and informative documents, of which we have studied many. Just a few of these OFRI documents have helped us in the following ways:

1. Unquestionably their most informative document is “Oregon’s Forest Protection Laws, an Illustrated Manual.” This document, which is updated frequently, takes the pages of jargon found in the Oregon Forest Practices Act (OFPA) and makes it directly applicable to the small forestland owner, with countless examples and illustrations. It is an invaluable reference from which to learn how to be good land stewards and follow the intent of the OFPA.
2. “Establishing & Managing Forest Trees in the Willamette Valley” is another excellent reference for those of us who live in this area and want to tie topics ranging from soil and climate to our trees.

3. OFRI produces relevant and well-researched documents pertaining to fish and wildlife, including, but not limited to “Fish Habitat and Passage” and “Oregon Forests as Habitat.” Documents such as these clearly advocate for protection of fish and wildlife, and the practices a forestland owner can undertake to achieve these goals.
4. A newly published document, “Carbon in Oregon’s Managed Forests” is another example of a science-based piece, made intelligible to the forestland owner by providing valuable information on how we may help participate in and enhance the carbon storage and sequestration (CSS) goals that will be needed in the upcoming years. We have been advocating for a robust CSS program for several years, and were proponents of the 2019, HB 2020 (the Clean Energy Jobs bill), which unfortunately failed in the state senate.

Additionally, OFRI puts on a number of important forestland trainings every year. Perhaps one of their greatest successes, in concert with the OSU Extension Service, is the production of biweekly, free webinars to the general public about a multitude of objective topics concerning Oregon’s forests. This is a replacement for the annual OSU Extension Service Tree School, which was held at Clackamas Community College on one Saturday each year in years past, but due to COVID needed to be curtailed, and in its place this marvelous webinar series was produced and is currently ongoing. Webinar attendees can number up to 400 people.

OFRI is funded strictly from Oregon’s Forest Products Harvest Tax, which is paid for by those of us who grow and then harvest their trees. No monies from Oregon’s General Fund are used.

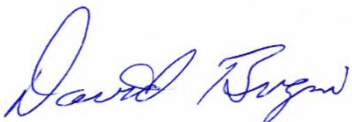
In our opinion, the following steps should be implemented prior to considering the elimination of the Oregon Forest Resources Institute:

1. The future disposition of OFRI should wait until Gov. Brown’s audit of this institute is completed.
2. Once the audit is completed, any recommended changes should be implemented by the OFRI.
3. If such changes have not been implemented within a mutually agreed to timeframe, then consideration of further action should be undertaken.

In summary, we find that HB 2357 should be withdrawn from further consideration, as such drastic action is not needed at this time.

Thank you.

Sincerely,



David & Mary Ann Bugni
30265 SE Kowall Rd.
Estacada, OR 97023