

House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources
February 22, 2021
Re: HB 2389

My name is Sarah Deumling and with my family I own and manage 1300 acres of family forestland in Polk County.

I think the most important missing part of the discussion about timber taxes is that timber is not a monolith. Proposed legislation tries to paint with a very broad brush which puts us at a large financial disadvantage. To wit:

For the past 34 years we have practiced commercial forestry, planting and harvesting trees, with first and foremost an eye to the ecological health of the forest that we are leaving our grandchildren and all Oregonians. We manage for all the timber species that are native here, hardwood as well as conifer. In spite of our annual harvests (between 400 and 500 MBF) we barely squeak by financially. Due to our ecological practices (single tree selection or small patch cuts, release of seedlings by machete instead of chemicals and no compaction except on permanent designated skid trails) our forest management costs can be as much or more than we generate in revenue.

The social values provided by our forest and our particular forest management are far greater than the lumber value of the logs we sell. The carbon we store with a permanent forest canopy and older trees (80 to 100 for conifer, older for oaks), the water resources we protect (three watersheds and direct domestic water sources for 4 families), the plant and animal biodiversity we encourage by not using chemicals and valuing all tree species, the recreational opportunities we offer (hunting, hiking, school field trips, etc.) all are totally unreimbursed but contribute to the quality of life we treasure in Oregon. And you want to tax us more??? Incentives would be more appropriate. No other ecosystem potentially stores more carbon, potentially protects more of the water resources, can protect so much biodiversity or filters our air as well as a truly ecologically managed forest.

I am talking about us, about family forest landowners - not about the timber industry or Wall Street owned forests. With very few exceptions we earnestly want to pass along healthy forests to our next generations, we want to protect the streams for fish and for our grandchildren, we are part of our communities, contributing to them economically and socially because we want them to thrive in every way.

Farmers with their property tax deferral don't pay harvest or severance or privilege taxes when they sell wheat or grass seed or beef. And if their crop fails they get another chance the very next year. We take big risks for 60 or more years - fire, ice, drought/climate change, wind, insects and diseases and then, when there is finally something to sell, you tax us (in addition to the state and federal income tax we pay) - and now you want to tax us more. I don't get it! Perhaps you think we just sit there and watch those trees grow? We lost more than 10% of our young fir to climate change - longer, hotter, drier summers. Less than 2 weeks ago we lost literally thousands of young trees, bent, broken and uprooted, to the ice. I invite each of you to join me for just one regular day in the woods and you will never think the same about family forestry again. Please think long and hard before adding to our tax burden.