

To Committee Chair Witt, Vice Chairs Breese-Iverson and Hudson and members of the House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee:

I offer this in support of my oral testimony later today (Feb. 25, 2021) in opposition to proposed House Bills 2379, 2389 and 2430.

My name is Theresa Hausser. My wife and I are new woodland owners. After years of retirement saving and dreaming, in 2019 we were able to purchase small forest property in Vida in East Lane County.

Although we'd always loved the woods and recreating in them, being responsible for a woodland property was a whole new experience. It turned out that we didn't actually know much of anything about the woods and caring for a woodland property. Fortunately, we had access to invaluable fonts of information like OFRI, the OSU Extension, ODF, and other landowners and land managers. Also fortunately, the woodland we purchased was a healthy mixed age little forest. We tucked in and took every class we could to learn about how to be responsible managers of our land and contribute to a healthy watershed and ecosystem. COVID's squelching of in-person gatherings, combined with OSU and OFRI's commitment to science based education, meant we could take online all the Tree School classes we were interested in, not just the few we would have been able to attend in-person. We connected with the McKenzie Trust and Pure Water Partners to protect our little riparian areas. We got out our loppers and pulaskis and saws and began clearing storm blowdown and going after invasive vegetation and pruning for fire clearance and thinning for health. We drafted our Forest Management Plan. We put our acres not already in Small Tract Forestland into the program (thank you to the patient Lane County A&T people!); after all, we were likely 15 years out from a harvest.

Then the Holiday Farm Fire happened.

We were fortunate—the home we were having built hadn't begun construction. The hole in the ground awaiting a concrete pour was unharmed. But no part of our woodland was unscathed. Again, we are fortunate—we can salvage harvest a portion of our older trees (at least 15-20 years before we would have planned a harvest)—and that will help us replant. It will take years as we deal, tree by tree, with burned trees too young to harvest but a little too dense to just interplant. The salvage harvest should help us not drown financially as we work to restore our part of a healthy ecosystem. (This salvage harvest also kills our thoughts that a planned harvest of mature, healthy trees in 15-20 years will help us afford health care.)

We have no argument with existing harvest taxes—especially the portion that funds the landowner education goldmine that is OFRI. But severance taxes that ultimately encourage conversion of forestland to more profitable uses and bills that seek to eliminate the outstanding science based resource that is OFRI are not a way for taxes to contribute to the common good. They seem, in fact, an unnecessary cruelty on top of the devastation wrought by the Labor Day Fires. Particularly in the case of transferring harvest tax monies from OFRI to fund fire fighting: OFRI offers instruction on the Forest Practices Act, which, in addition to providing for healthy forests, mandates practices to prevent fires during logging operations. Firefighters were not able to fight the Holiday Farm Fire (not caused by woodland owner activities) until well after we experienced our devastation. Even with the early opportunity to fight the fire, saving forestland (reasonably) would never have been a top priority. To take woodland owner harvest tax monies away from OFRI and transfer them to firefighting efforts that will not include our woodlands...seems...strange, if not unwittingly cruel.

Thank you for including this testimony in your deliberations.
Theresa Hausser, Vida

