

I am in favor of instituting a severance tax this session -- a HB 2379 that has been improved in the following ways:

1. Rural counties need revenue from timber harvest like they used to get, to provide public health and other important services. It is time to reinstate the tax and return 60% to counties where the harvest occurred.
2. Drinking water is not being protected from erosion from logging roads and steep slope logging and pesticide runoff. We need to provide Department of Environmental Quality the power to enforce and improve regulations in logging to protect drinking water. What's more, timber corporations should pay their fair share for logging damages to drinking water.
3. Specific funding for watershed and water system improvements NEEDS to be included. The severance tax should provide responsible smallholders a tax break for conservation easements or for managing the forest with Forest Stewardship Certification, because this type of management protects habitat and enhances water storage and purification.
4. Funding for all counties should be included to prepare for and protect from wildfire. Climate change is well underway, and we know we are at risk from more prevalent fire weather, especially given the damage done by pests whose life cycles are more robust thanks to the changing climate.