

Victoria Cloud Sears
In favor of HB 2397 to Impose Severance Tax

I live in the unincorporated town of Corbett, in Multnomah County.
I am an owner of Forest Land.
My drinking water source is from the Gordon Creek Watershed

Three Oregon State Parks in Multnomah County are in danger of losing their drinking water, due to corporate logging activities. These very popular parks are Rooster Rock State Park, Dabney State Park, and Lewis and Clark State Park, all of whom are customers of the Corbett Water District. Corbett does not own any property in our watershed. The watershed is owned by Frank Lumber, Weyerhaeuser, BLM and USFS. Extensive clearcut logging by the corporate landowners, primarily since the severance tax was eliminated about 20 years ago, devastated the South Fork of Gordon Creek. Our water intake in wet months was overwhelmed with sediment, the water quality degraded, and the intake clogged. In dry months there was no longer water, because the previously diverse forest is gone, and does not retain water in the summer. We had to abandon the South Fork intake. The clearcuts in the North Fork of Gordon Creek have reduced summer flow as well, and we have about 50% of the water intake we had in the 1990's. There have been at least three times in the summer when we had NO flow to collect. There was little or no water available for fire fighting. The corporations profited tremendously from this logging, while we who rely on water suffer from their profit. Therefore, I support the return of the Severance Tax for corporate owners, owning more than 5,000 acres of forest land.

We need the large forest owners to pay their fair share of taxes, so we can have a chance to reverse the negative impacts they have had on the common good of the citizens of Oregon. The Timber Tax Fairness proposal to return the Severance Tax is most reasonable, although it does not make up for the years of extraction with little if any financial responsibility to the State. Timber Tax Fairness would allocate 25% of the tax towards watershed improvement including replacing failing or needed infrastructure, and toward watershed health. Corbett needs this revenue to repair the old and failing pipes, for purchase of watershed land by the State to protect and return our watershed to a productive, safe supply of water. We need the revenue to re-tap the South Fork of Gordon Creek. We need the revenue to assure State Parks have water to operate.

In 1990 the USFS conducted an Environmental Assessment of Gordon Creek Watershed for the purpose of protection by gating roads into the watershed. The garbage dumps and target shooting of garbage and trees needed mitigation, and repair to eroded stream banks made by motorcycle groups who drove back and forth in the creeks. I thank the USFS for the gating and cleanup. The EA identified Pine Martin, Spotted Owl, the Giant American Salamander, and Pacific Yew in the watershed, all indicators of a healthy diverse watershed that provides the best water. These indicator species are no longer found in the watershed, because they do not live in clearcuts. We need to return the watershed to a healthy watershed, and need revenue to do so. It makes sense to tax those who caused the problem.

I wonder what will happen when the State Parks no longer have a water supply, or, that the flow is so reduced that there is none to flush toilets. Will there be signage outside the gate requesting guests to bring their own water to flush the toilets? Will the parks buy water elsewhere and haul it into the park at an exorbitant price? Will there be a host checking cars to make sure the guests are bringing enough water? Will they close the parks, or deal with the unintended consequences of lack of water? I remind you of what happened some years ago when the National Parks were closed, and the public disrespected that closure. That is what we face ahead.

My life and property value depends on water