

February 25, 2021

Chairman Brad Witt and Committee
House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources
900 Court Street NE, Room 453
Salem Or 97301

Dear House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources,

I am writing today in strong opposition of HB 2357, and frankly, I am disgusted to hear that one of our state's valued institutes, Oregon Forest Resources Institute (OFRI), is currently under attack. There are many reasons why I oppose HB 2357 and I plan to express some here in a way that promotes dissemination of fact, science and hopefully education, rather than simply stating my personal opinion and political agenda.

To start, I think it's important that you know a little about my background. I am a first generation Oregonian. I was raised recreating in our local rain forest; backpacking, hiking, fishing, swimming, collecting, hunting, camping, surviving, mountain biking and exploring. My love for forest recreation evolved into a concern for the longevity of Oregon forest resources and led me to a degree in forestry and fire science from Oregon State University. I have been a wildland firefighter and forestry intern since 2007 and a professional forester since 2010. I continue to devote my life's work to ensure a balance of forest uses are sustained into perpetuity including but not limited to recreation, wildlife habitat, ecological function and the promotion of rural economies. Some examples of balance of forest uses that I have personally taken part in include using funds from harvested timber to: expand campgrounds, to install fish passage structures where there were impediments, to create snags in areas with little den and nesting habitat, to create roads that provide access to the forest, to thin overstocked forest stands to promote healthy forest growth, to replant millions of baby trees (mostly Douglas-fir) in areas with open sunlight that they require to thrive and to provide hundreds of living wage jobs to the small rural community. I spend the vast majority of my time studying about, working and playing in the forest and it is an understatement to say that the forest is my happy place. That is why I oppose eliminating OFRI, a resource that has proven beneficial to my work and many others.

After reading some testimony for HB 2357, it is important to remind Oregonians that funding for OFRI comes from Oregon forest products taxes and not the general tax fund. Oregonians are not paying for OFRI, land owners who harvest and mill renewable timber pay for OFRI. The Oregon Legislature created the Oregon Forest Resources Institute in 1991 to advance public understanding of forests, forest management and forest products, and to encourage sound forestry through landowner education. OFRI meets these objectives. Further, for those who seem to insist that forestry is a political debate rather than an scientific exercise, I'll remind you that OFRI is currently comprised of 6 democratic representatives and 4 republican representatives.

OFRI is a forest information powerhouse and provides a vast amount of valuable forest facts to Oregonians. One of my personal favorites is their Annual Forest Report that provides information about various landowners, harvest levels, fire information among many other interesting facts. Another resource that is used in the forestry, small woodland owner and restoration ecology communities is the Oregon's Forest Protection Laws, An Illustrated Manual, which summarizes complex forest practices laws for land owner understanding and compliance. I am a forest expert and I use this resource on a regular basis as a reference to forest practice laws when I implement land management and restoration

projects. The majority of OFRI publications are produced in collaboration with forest experts from various fields, academia, landowners and other state and federal agencies. Some of their recent work supports scientific reviews (science reports) that outline the role forest and forest products play against climate change, provide valuable information about managing a forest for wildlife benefits such as the recently listed Coastal Marten and analyzing how intensive timber harvest and specific harvest techniques effect drinking water sources, among many others. I urge you to visit their webpage and to study the resources.

OFRI is committed to forestry education and allocates substantial funding towards outreach and education for adults and children alike. My partner is a dedicated k-5 teacher at a title 1 Oregon school and uses OFRI funds to pay for outdoor education that would otherwise be inaccessible to her and her students. Many of her students would not ever have the opportunity to visit a forest, let alone learn about the roles a slug plays in an ecosystem, without the funds and educational resources provided by OFRI. In addition, OFRI funds a program called, "Talk About Trees," where OFRI hires a professional to provide hands on teaching to k-5 students about tree growth dynamics. OFRI also provides professional development opportunities for teachers to expand their understanding of forests and forestry.

OFRI supports resource professionals such as myself who have dedicated their lives work to the sustainability and continuity of forest resources, teachers and students and their journey with education of the natural world and Oregonians with a collection of sound scientific data and the dissemination of facts. OFRI has surpassed their original intention to advance public understanding of forests, forest management and forest products, and to encourage sound forestry through landowner education and we need their continued support. Please join me in opposing HB 2357.

Sincerely,

Andrew Puerini

Andrew Puerini
Outdoorsman, lover of all things nature, concerned Oregonian, forester