

SEVERANCE TAX Bill 2379

As the Oregon legislature considers Severance Tax Bill 2379 two overarching goals should dominate the discussion; mitigating climate change and providing jobs for rural Oregonians. Only a severance tax of 1990 proportions for harvesting trees on private land would significantly increase the funds that counties now receive from logging on state land and help accomplish both of these goals. I definitely support a severance tax but the bill under consideration is not bold enough to address either climate or rural unemployment issues.

With an adequate increase in funding for counties coming from a severance tax on private land the Oregon Department of Forestry will no longer need to sell timber on our state land. All clearcutting of state land could end leaving the ODF to focus on forest restoration and wildfire mitigation. These activities would help mitigate climate change while providing abundant employment opportunities for workers in rural communities. Funding for ODF should come from measures like eliminating the Oregon Forest Research Institute, ending subsidizes for the OSU forestry department and allowing some selective logging on state land as part of the restoration of forests.

Tax breaks could be offered to timber corporations for doing selective logging instead of clearcutting and brush clearing by hand instead of aerial spraying. These measures would also help accomplish climate change and rural employment goals. Best of all, those corporations would be paying their fair share of taxes again like they did prior to 1990.

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