

Dear Chairman Witt, Vice-Chairs Breese Iverson and Hudson, and all committee members:

My name is Bonny Glendenning. I'm an Environmental Educator for Port Blakely, a fifth-generation family-owned sustainable forestry company in the Pacific Northwest. I am writing in opposition to HB 2357, which seeks to eliminate OFRI, along with HB 2379 and HB 2598 which will defund the organization.

Port Blakely has provided an Environmental Education program at no cost to schools in Washington and Oregon for 30 years. For the last 12 years, OFRI has partnered with us to provide student transportation to forest field trips in Molalla. When school field trips resume, we look forward to welcoming our 100,000<sup>th</sup> visitor to the program.

Five years ago I gave a speech. It wasn't motivated by politics or money, it was simply an expression of gratitude for OFRI... an acknowledgement of all of the ways they help educate Oregonians about forests. My speech "*5 Ways That OFRI Gives Us a Hand*" is below, and it details just a few of the services the organization provides. These resources will be lost, if OFRI is eliminated.

**1. Free science-based teaching materials, teaching tools, manuals, and videos**

I constantly refer to OFRI's latest publications for statistics, fact-based teaching, and details about Oregon's Forest Practices Act. OFRI works directly with scientists and educators to ensure materials reflect current research and grade-level educational requirements. The packets I send home with teachers after each field trip are stuffed with their science-based materials and Forest Fact Break videos for students. Recently, our company hired a brand-new Environmental Educator. The first thing I did is order OFRI materials to give her the background knowledge she needed, to accurately teach about forestry. And as a small forestland owner myself, OFRI's Oregon Forest Practices manual has never been out of reach.

**2. Student transportation to forest and natural resource field trips**

Bussing classes to and from field trips is one of the largest expenses teachers encounter when searching for opportunities for their students. In the field of education, we know providing expanded learning environments is a best practice, but the fact that there is no money for field trips is a barrier for most schools, especially the large number of Title 1 classes we serve. Hundreds of times, I have heard 10 and 11-year-old students say "I've never been in a forest before". It breaks my heart. And many of these opportunities, throughout the state, are now at risk because OFRI may not be there to pay for bussing. Over ½ of our state is covered in trees. How will the next generation learn about the value of these woodlands -- environmental, economic, and recreational -- if these programs are not available?

**3. Improving education through networking, and teacher professional development**

Another exceptional service that OFRI provides is their organization and facilitation of the Forestry Educators Networking Group. We are a network of professional educators from around the state, who come together to collaborate on programming, improved practices, and the newest methods to incorporate more state and science standards. OFRI also supports the

Oregon Natural Resources Education Program, housed at OSU, which provides teachers with the knowledge and skills to confidently teach students about nature. Over the last 14 years, I have continuously evaluated and improved our program with tools from both resources.

#### **4. A base of forestry knowledge**

I have observed OFRI's Environmental Ed programs at the Oregon Garden firsthand. Their educators are of the highest quality, and we have worked together to improve both of our programs by sharing techniques. OFRI's science-based high school curriculum is used in 70+ high school natural resource programs, over 40 of them have CTE (Career Technical Education) accreditation. And in the last few months I've attended multiple forest health and wildfire presentations for adults, featuring OFRI staff. The capacity of this small organization will not be duplicated elsewhere, and certainly will not be replicated on the relatively small budget, under which the Institute currently operates.

#### **5. Oregon's economy, forestry is one of our core economic strengths**

In 2014, Port Blakely offered to host one of the largest forestry "In the Woods" shows on the West Coast. The goal was to teach Oregonians everything we could about sustainable forestry in Oregon, from planting to harvest, and everything in between. I had never attended a show, and didn't know where to begin, but Julie from OFRI was there to advise. It was her 4<sup>th</sup> show, and a huge endeavor. Together we brought 2500 teachers, students, and parents into the woods in 2 days, each group guided by volunteer forestry professionals from across the state, who were recruited by OFRI. More than 2500 Oregonians learned about wildlife, ecology, forest fires, harvest technology, and the 60,000 jobs the forest sector provides to Oregonians.

Thank you for taking the time to read this testimony! Given the value OFRI brings to all Oregonians, elimination of this resource would be a painful blow to educating Oregon citizens about the critical role forests fulfill: providing clean water, offering wildlife habitat, and combating climate change. Please oppose the elimination of OFRI through HB 2357, HB 2379, and HB 2598, as I hope you understand Oregon will suffer if this organization is eliminated.

One value I know we can all agree upon is that ***we love forests***. Children and adults learn the importance of all forests: public, private, and tribal, through education. If we want future generations to cherish what is special about Oregon, and to appreciate the fact that trees cover ½ of our state, ***they must have opportunities to learn about forests!***

Sincerely,

Bonny Glendenning

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