



# Associated Oregon Loggers, Inc.

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February 2, 2022

The Honorable Jeff Golden, Chair  
Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Wildfire Recovery  
Oregon State Capitol  
Salem, OR 97301

Subject: SB 1546

Chair Golden, Vice Chair Kennemer and Committee Members:

For the record, my name is Amanda Astor. I am here on behalf of the Associated Oregon Loggers (AOL) as their forest policy manager. I am a Certified Forester through the Society of American Foresters with a background working for the Forest Service and forest trades associations.

Thank you for the opportunity to share with you the voice of nearly 22,000 small business family forest operators, some of whom relied on the productivity and sustainable management of the Elliott State Forest for decades and were significantly disenfranchised by the abrupt halt of forest management activities in 2012 and beyond.

First, I wanted to thank the Chair for hearing SB 1546. As the Elliott State Forest sits idling, it continues to become denser with fuels, more overgrown with unhealthy and competing vegetation and further away from its potential as a sustainable and productive resource.

AOL's members will provide the necessary skills and tools to achieve the mission and management objectives of the newly proposed Elliott State Research Forest. With their road equipment, chainsaws, drip torches and planting bags, they will help Oregon State University implement prescriptions and research plans.

This is why we request a more detailed list of specified requirements for certain seats on the Board of Directors. It will be critical that the Board is made up of pragmatic individuals that can ground the research and management objectives of the Elliott State Research Forest in the questions that managers need answered, not just what a researcher finds interesting. The Board must also consist of professionals who understand complexities of on-the-ground operations and who have had to balance mitigation measures with operational feasibility.

AOL requests that at least one Director specifically represents the operator community who can advise on operational feasibility, safety and operation costs. Loggers are extremely resilient and are constantly coming up with unique solutions to operational roadblocks due to operational safety, ecological concerns, public safety and more. Forest operators are always developing creative ways to solve problems that foresters, scientists and other resource specialists may not think of. This is because they do this work every day and want to do right by the land so they can keep working and supplying the world with sustainable wood products that are good for the earth. They are also the experts in OR-OSHA Division 7 which dictates safe forest activities in the woods. This perspective is critical on the Board of Directors.

In order to ensure durability and credibility of the Board of Directors, AOL suggests the other 6-8 positions on the Board are more specifically identified as well. There should be balanced representation of forestry professionals, environmental interests, local governments, tribes and recreationists who must all show competency in project development and implementation. After all, a research forest is only as good as the questions it seeks to answer and the ability for it to actually implement the work on the ground.

AOL also believes the executive director's experience in forest management needs to be a requirement identified in the bill. ORS 526.031 (1) states, "The State Board of Forestry shall appoint a State Forester, who must be a practical forester familiar with western conditions and experienced in organization for the prevention of forest fires." AOL believes SB 1564 must also identify at a minimum a requirement of the Elliott State Research Forest Authority executive director to be a "practical

forester familiar with western conditions.” We also believe the executive director should not be limited to a four-year term as this will create difficulty in hiring and continuity of leadership for the Elliott State Research Forest Authority. The position will have to be flown as a limited duration which typically results in a smaller applicant pool because it is less desirable than a permanent position. An experienced leader with management experience is not likely to leave a good job to apply for an unstable four-year commitment. To add to the lack of durability and attractiveness of the roll, the fact that a politically appointed Board will have the authority to hire and fire the individual is concerning. Stability could be achieved if the executive director position is converted to a fulltime employee whose performance is reviewed based on their position description and key performance indicators that must be developed by the Board in consultation with Oregon State University to ensure consistency with the University’s human resource practices. This additional responsibility of the Board to develop key performance indicators and consistency with human resource practices at the University to develop a standard mechanism to review performance, determine appropriate disciplinary actions and ultimately decide when firing of the executive director would be appropriate, should be added into Section 5 of the bill.

In closing, we would be remiss if we did not note the fact that the Elliott will be continuing to add significantly to its fuel loading under the proposed management by Oregon State University. AOL is concerned at the lack of management that is proposed for the Forest given the productivity of the asset and by setting such a low threshold, the University has reduced its ability to do certain research. A much higher maximum harvest per year should have been set in order to provide maximum flexibility to its researchers to explore any forest management question that practitioners may have. The maximum timber byproduct that will be produced from the University’s research on average is about 17 MMBF. This is equivalent to the volume sold from approximately 3-4 average Oregon Department of Forestry timber sales per year. To put this into perspective, the Elliott previously harvested an average of 23.7 MMBF annually from 1995 through 2010 where millions of dollars were produced for the Oregon school system, nearly half of the forest was reserved for marbled murrelets and the norther spotted owl, water quality and quantity was protected through buffers and roads were well maintained. It is inconceivable to imagine how an average of 17 MMBF per year will pay for road maintenance, create a healthy and sustainable forest and keep the new authority in the black.

Either way, AOL recognizes the unique situation the state is in and simply asks that balance and true experience is sought on the Board of Directors through more detailed bill language as well as changes to the hiring and firing process for the new Authority’s executive director.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on our views of SB 1546.

Graciously,



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