

FROM THE DESK OF SAL PERALTA

2/3/2022

Chair Golden, Vice Chair Kennemer and members of the committee,

Thank you for your public service. Thanks also to Senator Lee Beyer for helping to secure his legacy as one of Oregon's great conservationists through his work on this bill, and in the last session on updating Oregon's recycling framework. Oregon is in his debt.

My name is Sal Peralta. I am writing to express my support for SB 1546, which would establish the Elliott State Research Forest from the lands formerly consisting of the Elliott State Forest.

In reviewing the testimony that your committee has received, I'd like to highlight the testimony of Debbie Bosley, Chair of the Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua & Siuslaw Indians, who observed that this bill will create a long-term use that keeps mature growth intact, focuses commercial logging on already degraded habitat, and improves critical habitat for salmon and pacific lamprey.

That is the right set of priorities for this forest.

The research that happens as a result of these changes will play an important role in helping us better understand how native plant and animal species adapt to a changing planet and will benefit commercial and conservation interests going forward.

I disagree with the testimony of the Oregon Association of Loggers, which stated that commercial thinning reduces fires. Although road access to commercial timberlands facilitates fighting forest fires on commercial land, a 2018 study showed that the Douglas Fire on commercial lands burned 30% more severely than fires on federal timberlands. This is because mature, healthy trees absorb and retain more water, making them more resistant to forest fires than planted monocultures.¹

As members of the committee, you have each been presented with opportunities to leave a large legacy in this state. The vote you cast in this committee will be a part of that legacy more than many of the other votes you take. The mature growth you save in the Elliott will remain after our children's children are gone.

I urge you to join the majority of Oregonians who support the preservation of this forest for ourselves and our posterity and pass this legislation with an "aye" vote.

Respectfully,

Sal Peralta

¹ <https://www.opb.org/article/2020/10/31/logging-wildfire-forest-management/>