



**Testimony of the Klamath-Siskiyou Wildlands Center  
Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Wildfire Recovery**

**Oregon State Legislature**

**By Joseph Vaile, KS Wild, Climate Program Director February 3, 2022**

**Supporting SB 1501 and SB 1502**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on the SB 1501 and 1502, the Private Forest Accord.

I have worked on forestry issues in southern Oregon for 25 years and represented conservation interests as a negotiator of the Private Forest Accord. In my experience, it has become clear that there is a dire need to update the Oregon Forest Practices Act. Industrial forest management practices need to be updated for several important reasons: 1) The impacts of climate change on forests, including increased fire behavior in young plantations on industrial forestlands are increasing. 2) The need to store carbon to mitigate climate change in forests is urgent. 3) The degradation of wildlife habitat from clearcut logging is leading to the imperilment of many species. 4) The need to manage for cool, clean water to provide for people and aquatic life has never been more important.

You can see the impacts of ineffective regulation of industrial logging on a tour in Oregon's Coastal Mountain Range. Vast expanses of forests are managed with clearcuts, aerial herbicide sprays, and densely replanted with a timber crop. Oregon private forest rules are the weakest of the West Coast states and often allow logging right up to stream banks. Something needs to change, and the Private Forest Accord makes many positive steps to better protect aquatic habitats on Oregon's forests.

The Private Forest Accord would reshape safeguards for salmon and other aquatic species on more than 10 million acres of private forestland. This would be a huge step forward for climate-smart forestry, particularly in lessening the negative impacts of industrial forestry on the production of cold, clean water that Oregon's wild fish will increasingly need in a warming world. These waters are not limited to the land where clearcut logging is common, but they flow downstream to rivers, through communities and salmon streams. The Accord will also provide enhanced water quality as well as greater certainty for the timber industry and landowners through the development of a Habitat Conservation Plan for species listed under the Endangered Species Act.

The Accord covers many aspects of forest management, from leaving wider buffer strips along streams to protecting landslide prone areas. Forests along streams are critically important for

three primary reasons. First, forests shade streams in the hot summer months and keep water cool. Second, they act like a filter preventing sediment pollution from entering streams from upslope logging activity. Lastly, large trees eventually fall into streams, creating critical stream habitat like pools that are needed by fish and wildlife.

The Accord also greatly improves road rules and requires that all roads allow for the passage of fish, benefiting aquatic ecosystems. Inadequate road crossings can create barriers to fish and other species, which can lead to a loss of access to habitat for fish to reach cold water where they spawn. The agreement requires upgrades roads that are bleeding sediment, and to old stream crossings to ensure better fish passage.

Oregon's small forestland owners hold much of the best salmon habitat in their lowland properties. These landowners are diverse, and there are many that are members of my organization. The Accord helps ensure that these landowners are supported and given the resources and tools to manage their properties to benefit aquatic species with the creation of a new small forestland owner office. Encumbrances from enhanced stream buffers will be compensated with new tax credits. A new program will also be developed to increase state subsidies for fish passage and road upgrades.

Even with these changes, there will continue to be impacts to aquatic habitat from forest management. The Accord requires an annual commitment from landowners (\$5 million) and the state (\$10 million) to a 50-year fund to help improve habitat and protect water quality to mitigate some of these impacts.

Perhaps most importantly, the Private Forest Accord sets up an adaptive management program to provide science and technical information to support Board of Forestry decisions when needed to adapt rules, guidance, and training programs. Changes will be needed over time to achieve the resource goals and objectives identified in the Habitat Conservation Plan. This includes science based research inquiry and validation monitoring that seek to better understand the relationship between certain forest practices and their impact on aquatic resources.

**KS Wild urges the Committee to approve these two *Private Forest Accord* bills (SB 1501 and SB 1502) and pass them on for a full floor vote as soon as possible.**

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