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On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Natural Resources and Wildfire Recovery

Measure: SB1546

Public comment on SB1546 by:

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The decision to be made by the Oregon legislature on SB1546 is about more than the fate of the Elliott State Forest. It is about whether the state will step into the 21st century and awaken to the call to save life on the planet from the rapidly encroaching devastation of climate change, or continue deforestation in spite of the nearly unanimous warning of ecologists and climate scientists.

The Elliott Research Forest Plan takes the climate issue seriously but fails to do enough considering the climate crisis we are in. Speculation about benefits to be derived 50 years from now does not mitigate the damage that will be done prior and does not comport with the climate crisis timetable scientists say we are on.

It takes replanted fir trees a minimum of 20 years to begin sequestering a significant amount of carbon. As the climate warms and soils become dryer fewer and fewer replanted trees will survive. Consequently replanting in the Elliott will in no way compensate for the loss of tons of sequestered carbon due to currently planned clearcutting and thinning there.

In addition, the timber industry is the single largest producer of greenhouse gases in Oregon according to studies by both OSU and the Center for Sustainable Economy. Consequently, the ongoing logging in the Elliott will add significantly to the state's climate burden going forward.

With passage of SB1546 the timber industry will have won again in partnership with their old ally OSU. Behind the subterfuge of research the logging will commence on day one. Do we need more research to tell us what we already know; that road building in forests is extremely disruptive to wildlife habitat and increases erosion, that clearcutting is the most CO2 spewing extraction method of them all and is devastating to soil quality and habitat?

The loss of carbon storage will be particularly acute from the falling of old growth some of which is planned in the Elliott according to ecologist Bob Sallinger of the advisory committee who recently spoke in a radio interview for the Coast Range Association. Old growth trees can store upwards of 100 tons of carbon in their

lifetime.

Mr. Sallinger also said during the interview that the best scenario would be to leave the Elliott as a climate reserve. That notion was bolstered by testimony in the hearing yesterday that questioned whether the state had any current data on the value of the Elliott as a source of carbon credits if left untouched.

While I support further investigation of the value of the Elliott as a source of carbon credits if it leads to the creation of a climate reserve, it also underscores the fundamental problem with forest management in Oregon. For too long our forests have been seen as a cash cow for industry and the state.

The majority of the state's foresters are graduates of OSU where they have been imbued with the agriculture mentality that defines forests strictly in terms of board feet. The same mentality permeates the language of Oregon's state agencies and legislators who can't separate the idea of a tree from its worth in dollars. This same language and orientation casts a pall over the history of the Elliott Forest and is foundational to the current Elliott Research Forest Management Plan.

Finally, in deciding the fate of the Elliott Forest it can't be stated forcefully enough, ITS PUBLIC LAND! IT BELONGS TO ALL OREGONIANS! So where are the younger people, whose future is at stake, on the advisory committee? Will they be included in the Research Forest Authority? Meanwhile the chosen "stake holders" argue about the fine points of contingencies and outcomes they have no valid way to predict.

SB1546 should not go forward unless renegotiated.