



Senator Golden,
Members of the Senate Committee on Natural Resources,

We are small forest owners with 80 acres on in the west side of the Coastal Range. 40 acres are in mixed species of trees including Willamette Valley ponderosa pine, doug fir, red cedar, grand fir, alder, bigleaf maple, white oak and ash. The other 40 acres are in young doug fir.

We are already witnessing the devastating effects of the warming climate all around us that threaten the health of our trees. We have never seen more down wood and dying trees as this past year. Our pond dried up a month earlier than in previous summers. Just over the hill in Forest Grove, the emerald ash borer has appeared which could wipe out all our ash trees that grow in the wetter areas of our property. We see evidence of bark beetle in our downed wood and we are overwhelmed by stink bugs. Last spring, we had only one or two apples from our orchard which usually produces a heavy crop, because our mason bees and the wild honey bees were not active for pollination when our apples and cherries bloomed too early last spring. And, we needed to evacuate as a precaution when a wildfire burned out of control just over the ridge from us, due to severe drought conditions and high winds.

We are seeing a lot of mature trees, including giant cedars, being clearcut all around us. We are surrounded by even-age plantations of doug fir. We used to see a herd of 30 Roosevelt elk pass through our land on their way to pastures below us by Hagg Lake, but we have seen little evidence of them recently. We have also seen cougar, coyotes and even a bobcat.

By all accounts, the climate will only get worse. Much of the state is in extreme drought, weakening trees that then become more susceptible to the pests that are heading north. We cannot stand by and watch this destruction. We must do everything we can to mitigate the effects of CO2 in the atmosphere. We need to protect our forests, encourage older growth trees and harvest on longer rotations so our trees can continue to do their free work sequestering carbon from the atmosphere. We need to preserve them to protect fish streams and for our future water supply.

Doing nothing is not an option. We need to build resilience in our forests. SB 530 will provide the technical assistance and incentives to improve our forests, and help them adapt to changing climate conditions. We need advice based on the latest science, so that we plant the right trees in the right areas at the right time. The state needs to find funding to expand on existing agency programs for incentives for conservation easements, land trust acquisition, reforestation and afforestation, so that we can leverage the considerable federal funds coming in from the Inflation Reduction Act for this work. We need to keep our streams and soils covered by vegetation to keep them both cool and productive. And we need to provide cover and shelter for wildlife that is threatened by loss of forest habitat. This bill supports only voluntary programs so that we will not have to resort to extreme measures later on, by helping us increase carbon storage in our natural working lands. It is in all of our best interest to invest in these kinds of measures, before it is too late to bring back life to our natural world that supports all life.

Josie Koehne