



Date: February 25, 2023

To: Senate Committee on Natural Resources
Chair Golden
Vice-Chair Girod
Senator Prozanski

Senator Brock Smith
Senator Taylor

From: State Forest Coalition Member Groups

RE: Please Oppose SB 795 and County Takeover of Oregon’s State Forests

Chair Golden, Vice-Chair Girod, and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of member groups of the State Forest Coalition, including the Association of Northwest Steelheaders, Cascadia Wildlands, Lincoln City Audubon, Metro Climate Action Team, Northwest Guides and Anglers Association, Oregon Wild, Portland Audubon, Salem Audubon Society, Tualatin Riverkeeper and the Wild Salmon Center, we strongly oppose SB 795 and ask that you do not move this bill out of committee. SB 795 attempts to undermine decades of work to balance management of state forests for the “greatest permanent value” (ORS 530), and re-litigate the Linn County lawsuit.

This bill upends the work to carefully balance state forest management for multiple values, including timber harvest as well as clean water, recreation, and wildlife habitat. The Oregon Supreme Court affirmed the authority of the Oregon Board of Forestry to manage state forest for the greatest permanent value for Oregonians when it upheld the court of appeals decision in the Linn County v. Oregon [lawsuit](#). In a [poll](#) commissioned in November by the Oregon Values and Beliefs Center in consultation with the Board of Forestry, Oregonians overwhelmingly support clean water, fish and wildlife, and recreation as management priorities over timber harvest on state forest lands. SB 795 is out of step with the opinion of the courts, and does not address the fundamental tensions inherent in tying timber harvest to local services.

Strong, vibrant communities with access to clean water and healthy forests are essential for all Oregonians. The current system of funding local services with state forest timber revenue creates an unsustainable conflict between important government services and healthy forests, clean water, and outdoor recreation – all of which are needed for resilient local communities. Timber revenue fluctuates annually depending on log supply and market conditions. Additional

revenue sources that are not dependent on timber supply are necessary to supplement timber revenue and stabilize funding for local services.

Since the courts have decided the Linn County lawsuit, we have an opportunity to focus on solutions that stabilize funding for essential services in counties reliant on revenue from state forest timber harvest. Instead of moving forward with SB 795, we urge the committee to support forward-looking solutions that work to resolve these conflicts and diversify revenues for counties and local taxing districts. Now is the time to move together towards a more sustainable future with healthy forests and stable funding for county services. Please oppose SB 795.

Sincerely,

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