

Testimony on Senate Bill 795

By Robert Freres Jr.

Good morning Senators. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you in person. It's been a long time. My name is Robert Freres Jr. I am President of Freres Lumber Co. Inc. Located 30 miles from here in the Santiam Canyon. We celebrated our Centennial in business in Oregon last year.

Our company is a government contractor and is the most public timber dependent firm in the state. We purchase 50-70% of our logs from the state and federal governments. We cannot survive without the state timber sale program.

I will refrain from commenting on the Oregon Court of Appeals decision

against Linn County, 12 additional counties and 150 local taxing districts except to say it requires a suspension of disbelief that eight decades of state conduct didn't mean anything.

In the callous words of Governor Barbara Roberts following the threatened listing of the Northern Spotted Owl, we must "play the hand we are dealt" and that is what we are here today to do. Here, to right a wrong and return the lands to the counties.

Thirty years ago a gang of four scientists drew up the N.W. Forest Plan in secret and it promised 20% of historical harvests. It's never delivered 10% and 130 timber dependent communities in the Pacific N.W. were decimated and never recovered economically or socially. More recently

Oregon's Common School Trust Fund lost the Elliott State Forest revenues due to a scheme of sue and settle by the state and environmental groups. Now a 98,000 acre forest is off limits to harvesting and another catastrophic fire is in it's future due to a lack of management. Today under the continued sue and settle threat the Oregon Board of Forestry is proceeding with the Western Oregon State Forest's Habitat Conservation Plan placing one half of the lands they control off limits to management and timber harvests. Oregon has seen over 10 million acres lost to fire in the past 15 years. Nearly all of it on non-managed Federal land until the Labor Day 2020 Fires.

The Board of Forestry wants to replicate the failed model of the N.W. Forest Plan. It's hard to believe it but we are

governed by non forestry experts that would rather see our forests burn than contribute to the social and economic well-being of rural Oregon counties.

Forest Gump said, “Stupid is as stupid does.” Failing to pass SB 795 will only result in more fires, more smoke in our lungs and more poverty in rural Oregon counties. I believe we can all agree that government closest to the people govern the best and are most responsive to it’s citizens.

Coos County and Hood River Counties have responsibly managed their forest land for over a century. Let’s give other counties the same opportunity by voting yes on SB795.

Thank you