



Date: March 2, 2023

To: Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources
 Co-Chair Senator Dembrow
 Senator Anderson
 Senator Senator Frederick
 Co-Chair Rep. Pham
 Rep. Holvey
 Rep. Levy
 Rep. Levy
 Rep. Owens

From: State Forest Coalition Member Groups

RE: HB 5020 - Support the State Forest HCP and Revenue Diversification

Co-Chair Dembrow, Co-Chair Pham and Members of the Subcommittee:

The undersigned groups from the State Forest Coalition, including 350PDX, Audubon Society of Lincoln City, Cascadia Wildlands, Coast Range Association, NW Guides and Anglers Association, Oregon League of Conservation Voters, Oregon Wild, Portland Audubon, Salem Audubon Society, Tualatin Riverkeepers and the Wild Salmon Center, wish to express our strong support for the Oregon Department of Forestry’s continued work to develop and implement the Western Oregon State Forest Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP). Our groups also support efforts to stabilize funding for rural services that receive revenue from state forest timber sales by diversifying funding sources.

Oregon law requires state forests to be managed for the “greatest permanent value” to the state (ORS 530.050). Forest management activities must also comply with the requirements of the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA). In 2020, the Oregon Board of Forestry voted unanimously in support of the development of an HCP for western Oregon state forests to secure the greatest permanent value and comply with the requirements of the ESA to protect threatened and endangered species on state forest lands. The goal of the HCP is to protect threatened and endangered species while allowing ongoing forest management, including timber harvest activities, over the 50 to 70-year life span of the plan.

The proposed HCP covers 635,000 acres of state forest lands west of the crest of the Cascades. The majority of these forest lands are within the Tillamook and Clatsop State Forests in northwestern Oregon within one hour of the Portland metro area. These forests provide drinking water to hundreds of thousands of residents in northwest Oregon. The proposed HCP

is a balanced approach to the management of Oregon's state forests that would protect over 300,000 acres of the values that Oregonians care deeply about, including salmon, wildlife habitat, recreation, water quality and carbon storage. Timber harvest may occur in these protected areas to meet habitat requirements for fish and wildlife species listed under the ESA. The remaining 50% of state forests would continue to be managed for multiple uses, including timber production, to supply Oregon mills with forest products, provide jobs in the timber industry and revenue for local services in rural communities.

The result will ensure reliable levels of timber harvest and avoid costly litigation over the protection of endangered species. An approved HCP will protect critical habitat for endangered species and allow the issuance of incidental take permits for timber harvest activities, saving the state millions of dollars a year that it is currently spending to survey and avoid endangered species.

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 chose to uphold 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.

Now that the Linn County litigation is resolved, we have an opportunity to work together, in the spirit of the Private Forest Accord, to find solutions to stabilize funding for rural services. Timber revenue fluctuates annually depending on log supply, market conditions and other factors. The current system of funding local services with state forest timber revenue leads to conflicts between important government services and healthy forests, clean water, and outdoor recreation – all of which are needed for resilient local communities. Additional revenue sources that are not dependent on timber supply are necessary to supplement timber revenue and stabilize funding for local services. Our groups support solutions to provide additional non-timber dependent revenue to counties that receive state forest timber revenue to fill gaps in funding for local services.

Please support the Western Oregon State Forest HCP and efforts to find solutions that stabilize funding for rural services.

Sincerely,

Brenna Bell
Forest Climate Manager
350PDX

Joseph Youren
Director
Audubon Society of Lincoln City and
Salem Audubon Society

Grace Brahler
Wildlands Director
Cascadia Wildlands

Chuck Willer
Executive Director
Coast Range Association

Bob Rees
Executive Director
NW Guides and Anglers Association

Julia DeGraw
Coalition Director
Oregon League of Conservation Voters

Casey Kulla
State Forest Policy Coordinator
Oregon Wild

Joe Liebezeit
Interim Statewide Conservation Director
Portland Audubon

Victoria Frankeny
Riverkeeper & Staff Attorney
Tualatin Riverkeepers

Michael Lang
Oregon Policy Senior Program Manager
Wild Salmon Center