



Honorable Nancy Nathanson

February 13, 2024

Chair, House Committee on Revenue

Re: HB 4133

Chair Nathanson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Roger Beyer and I am submitting this testimony on behalf of my client, the Oregon Small Woodlands Association (OSWA). In addition to being the lobbyist for OSWA, I am also a multi-generation forestland owner and a regular member of the organization.

The Oregon Small Woodlands Association is a grassroots organization of more than 1400 member families organized into 14 local chapters led by volunteers around the state. We host popular, very educational events and tours, we publish a quarterly magazine, and we work closely with state and local organizations. Every year we recognize small woodland owners with exceptional properties and projects.

In Oregon, statute defines Small Forestland Owners as owning under 5,000 acres of forest land. 60% of our OSWA families are under 70 acres. OSWA member properties are as diverse as the forest landscapes of Oregon. Our members have diverse management objectives, diverse skill sets, and life experiences. They operate as individuals, families, or small businesses, sometimes, all the above. Common management objectives are Water, Wildlife, Recreation, and Timber. Stewardship of the land is a shared value for everyone.

First, I would like to thank Senator Steiner for convening the work group which produced this bill. OSWA served on the workgroup with a wide variety of other landowners. Thanks to Senator Steiner's leadership, the group was able to agree on guiding principles to use as a metric to advance ideas and form them into the bill you are considering today.

Due to some key reasons expressed below, the OSWA executive committee chose to remain neutral on this bill in the current form. We recognize there are some items in the legislation that will help improve Oregon's complete and coordinated wildfire suppression system, but to earn OSWA support, some key elements must be changed.

First and foremost, the bill would need to help correct the current inequity of funding for the Oregon Forest Land Protection Fund (OFLPF). This is one of OSWA's guiding principles and also was one of the workgroups guiding principles. Surcharges on improved lots and minimum lots currently account for more than 65% of the funding to the OFLPF. With all the revenue sources of the fund increasing by the same formula, this bill will not help to improve that inequity. OSWA feels this could easily be addressed in this bill. This could be accomplished by not increasing the surcharges at this time and indexing them going forward or by increasing them now and not indexing them moving forward, either method would be working toward greater equity.

Another reason for not supporting the legislation is contained in the -2 amendment. Using a set rate for grazing land will cause the rates for timber land in those districts to be higher. This late addition to the bill also seems to OSWA as going against the guiding principle of equity among rate payers of the system as it sets a different rate from those who have grazing in current zone 1 areas. Those landowners will continue to pay a lesser rate than even this new rate. OSWA felt that creating a new, arbitrary rate for some landowners only continues the current inequities in the grazing sector and will increase the rates for those members who do not have grazing acres.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.