

To Chair Meek, Vice-Chair Boquist, and Members of the Senate Committee on Finance and Revenue:

I am writing to OPPOSE SB 1593.

My husband and I own 45 acres of mixed species forest outside McMinnville. We purchased the property in the early '90's after the land had been logged by the previous owner. We promptly planted 16,000 Douglas fir seedlings. Last year, 29 years later, we had our first harvest: one truckload.

There are more than 100,000 Oregonians like us who own 50 acres or fewer of the 3.7 million acres in small ownerships across the state. In Yamhill County, my home, small landowners own more forest acres than any other ownership class.

When my husband and I came to forestry, we knew nothing about the woods. We turned to OSU Extension, our ODF Stewardship Forester, and OFRI for assistance and guidance. Our forest is certified by Oregon Tree Farm System, another valuable partner to those of us who want to create a healthy forest and to follow the rules.

I am alarmed that the legislature is again considering a bill that would kill OFRI, which is the most far-reaching agency educating small landowners. Can you not take "NO" for an answer? I am also surprised that you would favor FSC certification over OTFS; FSC may be the gold standard, but not all of us have gold to spare. Tree Farm works hard to connect landowners with appropriate practices and standards, and should not be "dissed" by your work.

The tiny creek on our property runs clear. Deer gather on the field beside our house most evenings. The elk tromp through every wonderful once and a while.

We love our land. We would not have the beautiful woods we live and work in without the hard, practical work put in by OFRI, Tree Farm, and other agencies. You should be supporting them, not throwing them out like trash.

Susan Watkins
McMinnville, Oregon