

## Testimony in **Opposition to SB 1593**

Good Afternoon Members of the Senate Committee on Finance and Revenue,

My name is Brian Rabe and my wife and I own timbered acreage (Certified Tree Farm) in Baker County, Oregon, and have since 2007. We understand the importance of adequate funding for fighting wildfires – about 240 acres of our Tree Farm burned in the Cornet-Windy Ridge fire in 2015. However, there are several major issues with how this particular bill is structured.

The climate east of the Cascades results in a dramatically lower production of timber per acre than west of the Cascades. The infrastructure to support a healthy market for timber in eastern Oregon is also greatly diminished from what it was 30 years ago, resulting in less competition for purchasing timber (lower prices) and fewer logger and log trucks (increasing costs). In addition, our predominant species is ponderosa pine, which is not used for dimensional lumber and is of much lower value than the predominant species in western Oregon (Douglas fir). Bottom line: It is very difficult to generate a positive return harvesting trees in this area. Much of eastern Oregon's private timber is on landscapes where trees may not be the dominant vegetation – many larger acreage ownerships are focused on raising cattle and are dominated by rangeland and meadows. Imposing a new tax based on acreage disproportionately affects eastern Oregon timber growers from all of these factors and more.

In addition, there appears to be an incentive for certification by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) but not for certification by the American Tree Farm System. Small private woodland owners (less than 5,000 acres) are more likely to participate in the Tree Farm system whereas larger corporate timber companies are more likely to seek certification through FSC. From my experience, both of these certification processes seek the same outcome – sustainable management of forest land, not just for timber production but also for wildlife habitat, water quality, and recreation.

This bill also eliminates funding for the Oregon Forest Resources Institute (OFRI). OFRI serves a vital function in the development and distribution of educational materials for both private forest landowners, and the general public, to support sustainable forest management, wildfire prevention, etc. Funding for OFRI must be maintained.

It appears that the funds raised by this new tax would not necessarily be required to be spent on fire protection for the acreage from which the tax is derived. It is my understanding that no such requirement would be tied to the funding directed to counties and, apparently, 25% is going to the State Fire Marshall's office that does not protect timberland.

There are a lot of details to sort out in this bill and I know time is of the essence with this being a short session. In the interest of brevity, I will keep this short. Please do not advance this bill. There has to be a better, more equitable, way to increase funding that does not increase the burden on eastern Oregon woodland owners or eliminate OFRI.

Respectfully submitted,



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