

Submitter: Rich Fairbanks
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Natural Resources and
Wildfire
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1541

My journey toward support of SB 1541 It started as a joke. Last winter I was unloading firewood rounds with help from a volunteer at the Jackson County Fuel Committee. The fellow asked about the origin of the firewood. I explained that flat head borer bark beetle was killing the Douglas-firs on my land and in southern Oregon generally. I told him that the trees were once quite valuable, shading my house and the surrounding area, keeping the brush shaded out and in a pinch I could even sell the trees for lumber. But climate change was not kind to these 110-year-old firs. They die in patches, quickly cracking in the summer heat and no longer providing much shade. Now I could only cut up some of their corpses and donate them for firewood, to get some use out of the trees. I explained to the volunteer that bark beetles love mild winters and drought stressed trees. That climate change had doomed these trees. Therefore, I should send a bill to Exxon, British Petroleum, and the other oil companies, since they knew back in the 1980's that their products were going to cause heat waves and drought. Of course, I meant it as humor, black humor to be sure, but just a joke. The following spring, I got a copy of a peer reviewed paper in the Journal of Forestry. It was authored by several scientists and our own Jackson County Extension Forester, Max Bennett. It said that Flathead Borer was killing unprecedented amounts of Douglas-fir and that: ".... As landscapes become increasingly droughty with climate change, the impacts of this insect on Douglas-fir and perhaps other species will likely increase." That stopped me. Climate change WAS killing my trees. Within weeks of reading this science paper, I saw a report in the NYT that an Oregon County was suing the oil companies over climate change! The county was suing over the heat dome in 2021, but the principle is the same; You broke it, you bought it. Now comes SB 1541, an attempt to send the bill for our poor dying forests to the big oil companies. This is no joke.

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