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### **Oregon's Timber Industry Won't Be "Isolated" by Sen. Ron Wyden's Rhetoric**

Groups representing Western Oregon's timber industry today sent a [letter to U.S. Senator Ron Wyden](#), responding to recent comments he has made in relation to legislation he has introduced to dramatically alter management of federal O&C timber lands.

Recently Sen. Wyden has made comments suggesting [Oregon's timber industry and O&C counties need to be "isolated"](#) in how O&C lands would be managed in the future. Sen. Wyden has referred to the industry and counties as ["extreme"](#) and seeking a ["fantasy" return to historical harvest levels](#), which the groups say is completely untrue.

"We believe this type of rhetoric is unfortunate, especially coming from a senior U.S. Senator representing us as Oregonians and the many Oregonians employed in the forestry sector," the groups write. "Our industry has come to the table time and time again seeking to find a compromise solution for the management of the O&C lands. We engaged in good faith in Governor Kitzhaber's O&C Task Force. We supported the bipartisan House O&C plan that would set aside 55-percent of the O&C lands for conservation purposes and resulted in harvest levels of 550 million board feet, which is less than half of both the historic harvest levels and the annual growth of these lands. Instead of addressing this proposed level of harvest on the merits, you have resorted to straw man arguments and are inaccurately describing our industry as unwilling to compromise below a "fantasy" return to historical annual harvest levels of over 1 billion board feet."

Despite employing tens of thousands of Oregonians, and representing a cornerstone of rural Oregon's economy, the groups say that Sen. Wyden has ignored the industry's repeated offers to work with his office on an O&C solution that protects environmentally sensitive lands while creating more family wage jobs in the forest sector. Even those in the industry that Sen. Wyden claims supports his bill have expressed serious concerns about the legislation.

"We are disheartened that our industry's numerous offers to work with your office to constructively craft legislation that works for Oregon's rural communities and our O&C forests have been ignored," the groups write. "Similar offers from O&C county commissioners were met with the same silence. The result has been legislation that forestry experts believe would actually reduce the current, inadequate harvest levels, perhaps taking them to zero over time. This is due to the inclusion of overly prescriptive regulations, ambiguities and undefined terms, and a legal framework that fails to adequately address the current lawsuits and even creates avenues for new litigation. It is no surprise that senior BLM officials have described it as un-implementable."

Oregon's timber industry opposes Sen. Wyden's current legislation because the bill would threaten Oregon's remaining forestry infrastructure and jobs. The Association of O&C Counties also outlined their concerns in a [recent letter to the Senator](#).

"Make no mistake Senator, if signed into law, the current version of your O&C legislation would directly threaten Western Oregon's remaining mills, logging infrastructure and secondary wood products manufacturers, not to mention many family wage jobs and small businesses that depend on Western Oregon's forestry sector," the groups write. "Not only would it reduce harvests on BLM lands, but also impact the management of private forestland and make them more vulnerable to catastrophic wildfire. We are unaware of a single Oregon forest products company that supports the legislation."

Despite Sen. Wyden's recent rhetoric, the industry groups repeated their offer to work constructively on O&C legislation. They have also once again joined [the Association of O&C Counties in calling on the senator](#) to allow his legislation to be independently modeled and analyzed to determine whether his bill truly increases timber harvests as he claims. The repeated requests for an independent analysis and greater transparency have been rejected, leading many to wonder if there's a deliberate effort to hide what the bill would really do.

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