



Matt Comisky's Comments on HB 1946
Washington Manager, American Forest Resource Council
House Rural Development, Agriculture, and Natural Resources

February 13th, 2019

Good morning Chairman Blake and members of the Committee. I am Matt Comisky, Washington Manager for the American Forest Resource Council. We represent a variety of members, mostly sawmills in five western states. Our focus is on public timber issues and in Washington State that is management on Department of Natural Resources Trust Lands and US Forest Service lands. The DNR timber sale program is an incredibly important supply of volume for their mills. We have one member who has invested over a billion dollars in this state over the past 15 years in large part due to the DNR timber sale program. No one in this state is more concerned about the conversion of working forest than our members. An adequate, consistent, and reliable supply of timber to operate their mills is critical to the success of their business and the jobs they provide. Many in rural Washington, where family wage jobs are the most critical.

Today I am signed in as "other" on HB 1946 the Community Forest Bill. AFRC and many of its members recognize the growing interest in community forests, but we do have questions about HB 1946 and potential impacts to timber volume. One potential concern relates to impacts from moving any trust lands managed by DNR into Community Forest status and the loss of trust protections under the State Constitution and the State Supreme Court ruling in *County of Skamania v Washington*.

We also want to make sure a new community forest program doesn't negatively impact efforts to replace tens of thousands of state trust lands deferred from management under DNR's marbled murrelet conservation strategy. DNR has proposed \$28.5 million pilot project to partially address encumbered lands in SW Washington. Having served for a year and half on the Encumbered Lands Steering Committee, I can assure you the \$28.5 million is a down payment on the need to address the full picture in Pacific, Wahkiakum, and Skamania County. That does not even include addressing significant impacts to many junior taxing districts in Clallam, Skagit, and Whatcom counties as a result of the proposed murrelet strategy that might be proposed by efforts such as the Solutions Table.

The Community Forest Program Development report from a 2018 Budget proviso didn't include an investigation and identification of any potential impacts to the saw milling infrastructure that relies on timber volume from existing or potential community forests. We have shared the language in the bill with our members and have begun conversations with the bill's proponents in the hopes of addressing some of these key questions.

We look forward to ongoing conversations and work with the bill's sponsors and proponents to protect working forests from conversion to uses that reduce or eliminate the volume of timber to the market place from these lands. A big picture solution that protects the economic needs of local communities and the milling infrastructure can be found with the constructive efforts of all the stakeholders connected to this issue.

Thank you for your time.

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