



Comments on SB 5701, Senate Agriculture, Water, Natural Resources & Parks Committee Feb 7th, 2019

Matt Comisky, Washington State Manager for AFRC

Good Afternoon Chairman and members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak about Bill 5701 regarding State Forest Board Lands managed in trust by DNR.

For the record my name is Matt Comisky, here on behalf of American Forest Resource Council. We represent many of the purchasers of DNR Timber Sales. We understand the concerns of the proponents of this Bill over the lack of revenue to counties and other beneficiaries due to diminished timber sales offered by DNR in Klickitat County. Reduced volume directly impacts our members and the reduction in revenue impacts the public services supported by these timber dollars. Services our members, their employees, and contractors benefit from in their communities.

We support the intent of the Bill, but also share some of the concerns DNR has expressed, particularly potential unintended consequences the creation of community forests could have on the statewide management of trust lands our members rely on.

A few key examples of our concerns and questions are:

- Community forests lack the legal protections of the trust mandate as expressed in the State Supreme court ruling in *County of Skamania v State* (102 Wn.2d 127 (1984)).
- There are also questions about the distribution and accountability of funds from these lands, that currently are held in trust for the benefit of today's and future beneficiaries under a community forest
- Uncertainty about potential impacts to the larger DNR timber Sale Program, including changes to the HCP land base.

These are many of the same concerns we have over other proposals that would convert state trust lands into community forests, which may come before this Committee soon. These proposals deserve careful scrutiny to ensure no net loss of truly working forests and the resulting erosion of the logging and milling infrastructure in Washington state.

In closing, we strongly support the proponents desire to reinvigorate their timber economy to produce revenue and jobs in their communities. This similar desire exists in many rural communities throughout Washington state. There is a common thread throughout these communities regarding revenue and timber jobs. I have served for the last year and half on a committee trying to address these issues in three southwest Washington counties. Issues that are present in other communities as well. Bills such as 5701 and others before this committee should alert the trustee of these lands, that a thoughtful and well thought out solution is needed to address the financial needs of beneficiaries and the support of the forest products industry that provides jobs in many of these communities.

We look forward to and are ready to work with the proponents of this Bill in finding a solution that addresses the revenue and volume concerns many of us share.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak.

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