



Dear Chair Golden and members of the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Wildfire Recovery,

My name is David Wells and I am the 2022 State Chair of the Oregon Society of American Foresters (SAF). SAF is the National scientific and educational organization representing the forestry profession in the United States. With over 800 members in 14 chapters throughout the state, the Oregon SAF is the largest state affiliate of the National Society.

Oregon SAF thanks the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Wildfire Recovery for hearing SB-1546, a resolution to the disposition of the Elliott State Forest. The Forest is an outstanding asset, and the establishment of a research forest is a way for the Elliot to serve a useful purpose in addressing forest management research questions that can lead to more efficient and effective silvicultural and operational practices in the woods across the state.

At this time our principal concern with the proposed legislation is the composition of the Board of Directors of the Elliott State Research Forest. As written, this Board of 7-9 members is to be selected by the State Land Board, which consists of the Governor, Secretary of State, and State Treasurer. There are currently no requirements for diverse representation on the Board which could lead to an unbalanced governing body. Section 4(3)(d) of the bill directs the State Land Board to, “Endeavor to appoint members who have a full complement of relevant experience or expertise in subjects related to the mission and management policies and operations of the forest and demonstrated interest in the success of the mission and management policies of the forest.” We don’t believe that this requirement is clear enough to ensure balance and on-the-ground experience are represented on the Board. Without stronger representation requirements, the Board could conceivably have a very limited perspective on what is appropriate management and what questions need to be answered to help forest managers do their job to the best of their ability. Because the Board has oversight for the management of a forest, we believe it is important to ensure that at least one Board member be a professional forester with a strong understanding of general forest management. Management plans and research plans for the forest will be implemented by foresters and other natural resource specialists. A forestry practitioner can help the Board to assure that management and research proposals are appropriate and actionable. The Board is in charge of, “Overseeing the operational and fiscal integrity of the authority” as described in Section 7(1)(c) and Oregon SAF truly believes members of the Board must have the knowledge and experience to successfully carry this objective out.

This will most effectively be achieved by including at least one professional forester on the Board who has actually had to manage forestland and has an understanding of appraising timber, writing contracts and administering contracts.

We also think that there needs to be some kinds of checks and balances on the selection of the Board. The citizens of Coos and Douglas County have a particular interest in what happens on the Elliot; it is their backyard. There needs to be assurances that their interests are represented on the Board, and presently there are no guarantees. This may be accommodated by requiring a seat specified for a local county commissioner who must represent their constituents, not their own personal interests.

Once again, thank you for your work on this important legislation and the opportunity to comment. If you need clarification on any of the points we have made, please call me at 503-354-5707.

Sincerely,
David Wells
State Chair
Oregon Society of American Foresters

cc: Thomas DeLuca, Dean, Oregon State University College of Forestry