



**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®  
OF OREGON**

The League of Women Voters of Oregon is a 97-year-old grassroots nonpartisan political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government. We envision informed Oregonians participating in a fully accessible, responsive, and transparent government to achieve the common good. LWVOR Legislative Action is based on advocacy positions formed through studies and member consensus. The League never supports or opposes any candidate or political party.

April 5, 2017

To: Ways and Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources  
Senator Lew Frederick and Representative Brad Witt, Co-Chairs

Re: SB 5519 – Dept. of Forestry Budget - **COMMENTS**

**The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that natural resources such as forests and the animals and plants living within them should be managed as interrelated parts of life-supporting ecosystems.** The League understands the many values of our federal, state and private forest lands. We support the state's Land Use Goal 4, Forest Lands, and understand that our private industrial forests are among the most productive in the nation. Like our manufacturing and our agricultural industrial lands, our private forest industrial lands must be preserved and protected. We also appreciate the value of all our forests as the source of most Oregonians' drinking water.

We remind the committee of the Department of Forestry's mission:

*"To serve the people of Oregon by protecting, managing, and promoting stewardship of Oregon's forests to enhance environmental, economic, and community sustainability."*

We support Stewardship Foresters because it is their job to assure the Forest Practices Act is enforced. Their work to reach out to our small woodland owners and address some of the urban interface challenges is very important to the long term health of those small forests as well as our larger ones. We also work with the Dept. of Land Conservation and Development to address issues around development in the wildland urban interface to reduce conflicts as well as help protect against fire damage on both sides of that interface. Again, we raise the issue of breaking down silos among agencies with similar responsibilities.

We look forward to the completion of the Forest Electronic Notification System (FERNS) that will require electronic early notification of forest activities, including herbicide spray events, so that the general public can be informed of activities near where they live.

We have actively supported keeping the Elliott State Forest in public hands. We note that the Dept. of Forestry may be the public agency best able to address the issue of timber jobs in the second growth tree farms that exist today in the Elliott. We recognize that, with the loss of their contract with the State Land Board, they have dismantled much of the staffing infrastructure for that work, so a frank conversation on how best to manage the full complement of the Elliott's assets is needed. We do hope that the Legislature will support the decoupling of the Common School Fund from the Elliott so that both our schoolchildren and the public are winners for generations to come.

Separate from the Elliott, we have state forests that currently not only exist for timber production, but for recreation and education. We were disappointed that a Policy Option Package for public funding for the public benefits of our State Forests of recreation, education and interpretation programs was not included in the Governor's budget. We recognize the lack of General Funds this session and can understand the Governor's priorities that led to that decision. It does not mean we do not regret it. **We need more revenue.** Again, we cannot "buy" the services we want without paying for those services.

Another package considered, but rejected, by the Governor was additional capacity to address staffing to help in protecting water quality related to forest roads and landslide-prone terrain. Again, we understand the decision, but regret it. Until we address this issue, we will continue to lose federal funds at the Dept. of Land Conservation and Development and the Dept. of Environmental Quality. **We need more revenue. Until we come together to reduce agency silos and adopt fair revenue policies and tax reforms to adequately fund services and functions in Oregon, we will continue to govern crisis by crisis and all Oregonians will lose.**

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss this legislation.



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