

To: Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

Re: Testimony on SB 557

2/27/17

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on SB 557. I am grateful to both House and Senate Committee members for giving climate change bills an early and focused effort during this busy legislative session.

I have several reasons for asking for your support for SB 557. First, my husband and I live in the lovely and fire-prone Wildland Urban Interface, about 14 miles northeast of the City of Rogue River. Our property, as well as most of southern Oregon's woodlands, is always at risk for catastrophic fire. We appreciate the exceptional quality of the Oregon Department of Forestry's fire fighting skills, but are aware that prevention is a better investment. As landowners, we've implemented a plan to reduce fuels and improve the fire resistance of our structures and landscaping. We participate in the OSU Citizen Fire Academy and local committees to create Firewise communities for more safety. But it's not enough. Wildland fire sizes have increased dramatically in the past 20 years, and a hotter climate as well as heavy fuel loads from past fire suppression can defeat our best efforts. When we look to our neighbors in northern California, we see hundreds of homes lost each fire season. Our climate forecasts will put us in their current temperature range in the next several decades unless we can reduce greenhouse gases.

Water resources, particularly summer low flows and temperatures, will decide the fate of the Coho salmon recovery plan as well as the stability of steelhead and Chinook populations that depend upon the Rogue Basin. Again, a few degrees tip the balance for snowpack, the key to our stream quality. Here in the headwaters of Pleasant Creek and just one ridgeline from West Fork Evans Creek, we have excellent spawning grounds and juvenile escape habitat, some of the best in western Oregon. But our highest mountains are only about 4500 feet and their connecting ridges roll between 3000 to 4000 feet. Those are dangerously low elevations for snowpack-dependent streams in a warming climate.

Finally, we believe that taxing carbon at the source is the most efficient and least regulatory means of preserving the clean air and water we Oregonians are blessed with. And although we feel far better educated about forest fires, fish and stream quality than national politics, this seems like a critically important time for Oregon to take action. The states need to lead the Federal government by demonstrating solutions that work. Carbon-pricing is a winner and SB 557 will provide economic benefits equitably for rural as well as urban Oregonians.

Sincerely yours,

Marie Reeder and Bud Rigel

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