

Letter in Opposition to House Bill 2365
House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee
February 16, 2017

Chair Clem and Committee Members,

I am writing to encourage you to oppose House Bill 2365. It is nothing less than a first step toward the privatization of Oregon's federally-managed public lands. As an Oregonian who believes these lands belong to all Americans and are one of our greatest assets, I am strongly opposed to such efforts. I can think of fewer things that make me more thankful to live in this state than our amazing public lands - places like Crater Lake, Three Sisters Wilderness, and Hart Mountain National Wildlife Refuge - but also less familiar federal lands, like the portions of the Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest in my own backyard.

Federal lands are of huge importance to Oregonians and vital to our state's economy. According to a recent study, nearly two out of every three Oregonians is opposed to a transfer of federal lands, so why establish a task force to study something the majority of us oppose? Federal lands are also vital to Oregon's \$10.8 billion tourism economy. People travel to Oregon to visit our iconic landscapes like Crater Lake and Mount Hood, and like so many of us, they also float our rivers, fish our streams, and engage in outdoor recreation that occurs on federal lands throughout the state. Outdoor recreation is big business in Oregon, generating close to \$1 billion in state and local tax revenue and contributing to 141,000 direct jobs according to the Outdoor Industry Association. Why would we jeopardize that?

I will be the first to admit that there is much we can do to improve the management of our federal lands and promote greater prosperity for all of Oregon's communities. We should continue to invest in forest collaboratives and encourage greater stakeholder involvement in land management decisions. We also need to make a big commitment to workforce training, and we must think of creative ways to promote innovation and investment in rural Oregon. But let's not assume that we can clear-cut, mine, or graze our way to prosperous rural communities. That is not an economic reality in the 21st century, and the social and political realities are that most Oregonians will not approve of the deterioration in water quality, the harm to native fish and wildlife species, or the loss of ascetic values that would be sure to occur.

Other states have wasted time and money studying the transfer issue with little to show for it. I believe that Oregon should choose a different path – one that seeks to create vibrant and healthy communities while preserving our natural heritage and protecting our amazing public lands. I hope you will oppose House Bill 2365, and I wish you the best of luck in tackling the many challenges facing Oregon during this legislative session.

Thank you,

Dan Roper

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