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Representative Helm
Chair Workgroup on Agriculture,
Forests, Fisheries, Rural Communities and Tribes
November 23, 2017
Dear Representative Helm:

Please accept these brief comments on **S.B. 1070** from Umpqua Watersheds, Inc. (UW), a 501 c 3 non-profit environmental conservation, restoration, education organization, with offices in Roseburg.

As you must know, many, far too many of Oregon's watersheds have been, and continue to be, ecologically degraded. Numerous rivers and their tributaries run muddied in the winter, while receding to a trickle through the rainless summer months, their waters thereby too often failing to meet the minimum standards required by the Clean Water Act. Imperiled native species, ESA listed or not, struggle just to survive in these once cold rivers, let alone return to their natural abundance. At the same time invasive, warm water fish, like Small Mouth Bass, continue to spread in the Coquille, Umpqua and other Oregon waterways, rivers that were once the domain of iconic Salmon runs. Biodiversity widely declines as simplification steadily increases. Across our forested landscapes, the connectivity so critical to species survival is repeatedly interrupted, effectively destroyed. Wind-driven wild fires race through tightly packed, monoculture fiber farm plantations, threatening what remains of our primary, native forests. Increasingly toxic aerially applied herbicides are broadcast across these same watersheds, sometimes in witches brew combinations, delivering unknown synergistic impacts. An ever-growing spiderweb of forest roads, too many long-unmaintained, drives increasing hydrologic harm ever deeper into the Oregon Coast and Cascade Ranges, while providing a convenient avenue for the spread of invasive forbes, sylvan disease and ever-increasing human ignition of those same wildfires.

The long history of mass conversion of primary old growth/mature forest to plantation stands, on millions of Oregon acres, public and private, continued up to the final adoption of the Northwest Forest Plan. Short rotation, clear cut extraction, with little to no green tree retention, minimal riparian

protections, no consideration for carbon absorption and sequestration, disregard for biodiversity, destruction of connectivity etc. continues down to this very day on the privately owned, interspersed industrial sections within the infamous and most unfortunate O&C “checkerboard” of alternating ownerships. Adding ecological insult to environmental injury, the BLM has begun a return to the imposition of its own large canopy openings, euphemistically named “regeneration harvests,” following a hiatus of some twenty or so years. Too often, these public land versions of the clear cut, are sited directly adjacent, or in close proximity, to the many intervening and even larger (up to 120 acres each) private land clear cuts, and/or young tightly packed monoculture fiber farm plantations.

Clearly, the cumulative impacts from historic and current logging are numerous. None should be seen as quickly passing, soon to recover. Science has belied that claim. A recent study out of OSU (Perry-Jones 2017), based firmly on 40 to 60 years of hard USFS paired stream data, has reasonably concluded that all of this mass conversion of primary native forest to plantations has resulted in what appears to be a chronic low summer flow condition in too many of our rivers and streams. The implications of this worsening condition for imperiled species are dire. This flow depletion is no less worrisome for we human beings, threatening as it does all of the uses our societies have for abundant clean water.

Looming over, and magnifying, all of these troubling, even existential degraded conditions, are the palpable and onrushing perils of anthropocentrically induced climate change. The “carbon sink” contribution made, by remaining in tact public forests, towards mitigating this threat, is constantly undone, especially in Western Oregon, by the continued wide proliferation of large clear cuts on private industrial timberlands. This, at the same time that the BLM proposes and implements large openings of its own for these already, badly damaged natural systems.

Representative Helm, it is long past the time, when elected government in Oregon remembered its responsibility to the citizens it is sworn to protect, gathered its courage and declared that, indeed, the emperor has no clothes! Big Timber has had both an overt and covert hold on state and local governments for far too long. Allowing it to persist in the further diminishment, and even the outright destruction, of our common environmental heritage must be seen as a betrayal of that sacred trust between government and the governed. It is no exaggeration to say openly and loudly, that these environmental threats are existential.

Therefore, the Board of Directors of Umpqua Watersheds, on behalf of its active and deeply concerned membership, lends its strong support to an environmentally sound version of S.B. 1070, sharing the valid concerns of its brothers and sisters at SEEN, CSE, BARK and so many others within the Oregon Conservation Community. The time to act is now.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'JP Quinn', is written over a light gray rectangular background.

Joseph Patrick Quinn
Conservation Chair,
Umpqua Watersheds, Inc.