



PRESS RELEASE

OREGON HOUSE DEMOCRATS

For Immediate Release
June 8, 2021

For more information, Contact:
Tom Crawford:
Tom.crawford@oregonlegislature.gov

Oregon House Votes to Create Oversight on the Oregon Forest Resources Institute (OFRI) Following Reports of Unethical Practices

HB 2357 would provide small woodlot owners and communities with educational programs that promote forest health and support conservation-oriented adaptive management by establishing a Sound Forestry Practices Subaccount and Family Forestlands Subaccount within the State Forestry Department Account

SALEM, OR – Today the Oregon House voted to pass [HB 2357](#), a bill that would increase oversight over the Oregon Forest Resources Institute (OFRI) [following reports of unethical practices](#) by shifting funding to new Sound Forestry Practices and Family Forestlands Subaccounts at the Department of Forestry. The bill will also help refocus OFRI back to its original purpose of supporting sound forest practices and forest health.

OFRI has no oversight from the legislature, the Department of Forestry, or any government agency, yet it still receives funds approved by the legislature. The institute’s board is largely controlled by the timber industry without standards of accountability. Per reports and public record requests from OPB, The Oregonian, and ProPublica, OFRI has engaged in illegal lobbying, misleading advertisements, and diverged from its role in providing “objective information about responsible forest management and to encourage environmentally sound forest practices through training and other educational programs.”

“Today’s legislation will result in better guidance for our small woodland owners and healthier communities who are relying on OFRI to provide environmentally sound programs and direction as it relates to forest management,” said [Rep. Andrea Salinas](#) (D-Lake Oswego), co-chief sponsor of the bill. “We owe it to Oregonians to have trustworthy, transparent organizations that they can rely on when making tough decisions, especially as it relates to the environment.”

In 1991, the Oregon Legislative Assembly established OFRI to enhance collaboration among forest agencies and individuals, improve public understanding of the state’s forest resources, and

encourage environmentally sound forest practices. OFRI is governed by a board of directors who establish an annual privilege tax rate and is funded by revenue from the privilege tax. HB 2357 would transfer authority to set a privilege tax rate from OFRI to the Board of Forestry, add two voting members to the OFRI board of directors, and prohibit the use of privilege tax revenue for specified purposes.

“For far too long OFRI has been silencing science, attempting to influence politics, and exaggerating environmental outcomes”, said [Rep. Paul Holvey](#) (D-Eugene), co-chief sponsor of the bill. “This is an important first step towards needed reforms to forest practices, taxation, and management in Oregon.”

HB 2357 passed 32-27 and now heads to the Senate for consideration.

###