



**OREGON SENATE REPUBLICAN CAUCUS
OREGON HOUSE REPUBLICAN CAUCUS**

March 5, 2024

Via Electronic Mail

The Honorable Tina Kotek
Office of the Governor
900 Court Street NE, Suite 254
Salem, Oregon 97301

Dear Governor Kotek,

The Oregon House and Senate Republican Caucuses urge for the immediate reconsideration of the Oregon Department of Forestry's (ODF) proposed Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP). This 70-year forest policy does not support a balance between economic, environmental, and social benefits to all Oregonians.

While we generally support the intent of an HCP and reasonable conservation measures, we want to ensure our forests continue to be valuable economic and societal resources for our communities. In short, we are opposed to burdensome HCP measures that will knowingly have negative impacts on our communities for the next several decades.

While ODF has previously signaled its intent to balance conservation goals while maintaining current harvest levels, the newest projections released on December 13, 2023¹, visibly show a dramatic increase in conservation acres and a major decrease in timber harvest levels below what was promised. ODF advertised this HCP as a conservation plan with harvest certainty of about 250 mmbf (board feet) annually². The new projections show that timber harvest will be down between 168-185 mmbf annually. Obviously, this 70-year plan is heavy on conservation and light on economic viability which is not in alignment with Greatest Permanent Value.

On average, about 240-250 million board feet of timber have been harvested from Oregon's western state forests over the last 5-10 years³. 64% of the revenue from state harvests goes back to the counties and smaller "taxing districts" within them – an average of nearly \$68 million each year during the last decade. For reference, 250 million board feet of timber is equivalent to 32,500 average-size homes – almost the number of homes Governor

¹ <https://www.oregon.gov/odf/board/documents/fmp-hcp/fmp-modeled-outputs-report.pdf>

² <https://www.oregon.gov/odf/board/Documents/ftlac/ODF-HCP-BCA%20Final%20Report.pdf>

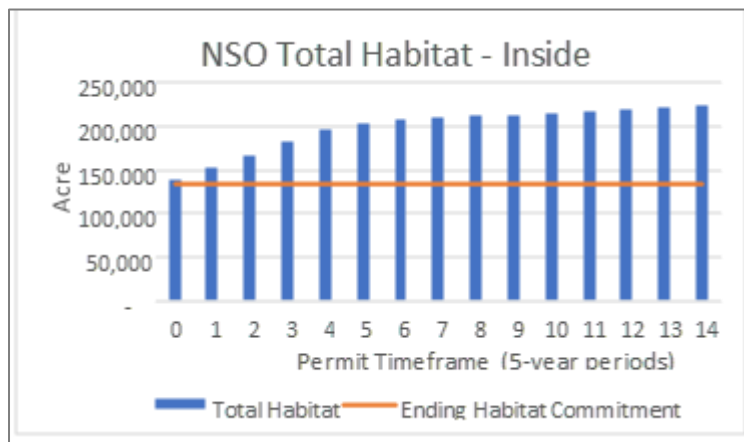
³ <https://www.oregon.gov/odf/Documents/workingforests/cftlc-annual-report-2023.pdf>

Kotek wants produced annually. 250mmbf also creates or retains 2,750 jobs per the Oregon Forests Resources Institute⁴.

This HCP coupled with ODF's Forest Management Plan will reduce that revenue by \$28-53 million annually, depending on which harvest scenario they implement⁵.

Not only will counties lose critical funding but mill closures and mass job losses will continue to cause a ripple effect through Oregon's rural communities contributing to more homelessness, drug addiction, and the need for public services. Communities surrounded by forests – especially unmanaged forests – need fire departments to protect them from forest fires. Fire Departments relying on timber harvest revenue to operate will suffer or be forced to close. This leaves our vulnerable communities defenseless.

Additionally, we are very concerned with our water and air quality, especially during fire season. This HCP will leave much of our state forests without management; 70 years of fuel accumulation increases the risk of fire and fire severity. Forest fire smoke already fills our air every year and the debris, ash, and mud destroy waterways. The cleanest groundwater comes from our forests before, during, and after forest operations. Children are choking on smoke during sporting events while the elderly hide inside their homes to survive our fire seasons. The unintended consequences of this HCP will increase the potential for more catastrophic forest fires, smoke, and poor water quality.



Oregon's Department of Forestry has added approximately 100,000 acres of conservation above what is required for the HCP. (*Northern Spotted Owl habitat is shown in ODF's graph but does not include the Marbled Murrelet, Red Tree Vole, or Coho Salmon habitat that are also being set aside*)

Scientists at local and international levels, including the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), recognize the climate benefits of managed forests, timber harvest, and wood products. Managed forests with sustained harvests provide the largest sustained climate mitigation benefit. According to IPCC's 4th Assessment (2018)⁶:

⁴ <https://oregonforests.org/forest-benefits>

⁵ <https://www.oregon.gov/odf/board/bof/20240103-bof-record-item-09.pdf>

"In the long term, a sustainable forest management strategy aimed at maintaining or increasing forest carbon stocks, while producing an annual sustained yield of timber, fiber or energy from the forest, will generate the largest sustained mitigation benefit."

ODF's report from December 13, 2023, even shows that more carbon is stored in the forest and in wood products in the scenarios that harvest the most volume.

We understand your priorities as Governor include homelessness, affordable housing, drug addiction, and forest fires. The HCP will exacerbate these issues. Alternatively, opening our forests to proper and sustainable management would help mitigate these issues and provide the necessary renewable wood products and building materials to address our housing crisis.

ODF will be in the same situation as the Trust Land Counties regarding the loss of timber harvest revenue. Taxpayers will be asked to foot the bill while mills close, logging companies auction off their equipment, our constituents lose their jobs, county services are strained, schools close, 4-H programs are canceled, libraries are closed, and emergency services are compromised.

For these reasons, we oppose the Western Habitat Conservation Plan. The Board of Forestry should reject the recommendation from the State Forester and instead, direct ODF to significantly amend the HCP to improve harvest and economic outcomes by any means necessary.

Respectfully,



Tim Knopp
Senate Republican Leader, District 27



Fred Girod
State Senator, District 9



David Brock Smith
State Senator, District 1



Kim Thatcher
State Senator, District 11



Dick Anderson
State Senator, District 5



Suzanne Weber
State Senator, District 16



Cedric Hayden
State Senator, District 6



Daniel Bonham
State Senator, District 26



Dennis Linthicum
State Senator, District 28



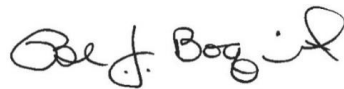
Bill Hansell
State Senator, District 29



Lynn Findley
State Senator, District 30



Art Robinson
State Senator, District 2



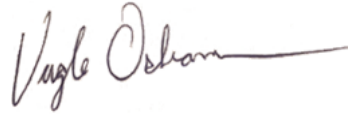
Brian Boquist
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State Representative, District 1



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State Representative, District 2



Dwayne Yunker
State Representative, District 3



Christine Goodwin
State Representative, District 4



Kim Wallan
State Representative, District 6



Boomer Wright
State Representative, District 9



Jami Cate
State Representative, District 11



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State Representative, District 12



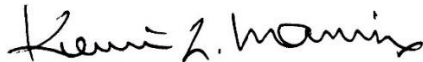
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Ed Diehl
State Representative, District 17



Rick Lewis
State Representative, District 18



Kevin Mannix
State Representative, District 21



Tracy Cramer
State Representative, District 22



Anna Scharf
State Representative, District 23



Lucetta Elmer
State Representative, District 24



Brian Stout
State Representative, District 31



Cyrus Javadi
State Representative, District 32



James Hieb
State Representative, District 51



E. Werner Reschke
State Representative, District 55



Emily McIntire
State Representative, District 56



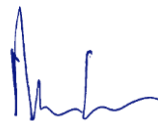
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Vikki Breese-Iverson
State Representative, District 59



Mark Owens
State Representative, District 60
