

Chair Imeson, State Forester Daugherty and members of the Board, for the record my name is Blake Rowe, and OFIC asked me to be part of the panel today to share some perspectives on the history of the riparian regulations and the specific question that you are considering today. I confess that I don't work in the forestry sector today, having worked since 2011 as the CEO of Oregon Wheat, but prior to that I spent over 25 years working for Longview Fibre Company and Longview Timber. I want to be clear for the record that I am not testifying today as a representative of Oregon Wheat.

During my years with Longview, I was privileged to serve as part of the stakeholder group that developed the 1994 riparian rules. I also served on at least 2 other working groups that conducted full reviews of the adequacy of the forest practice rules in the late 1990's and early 2000's.

The process that resulted in the 1994 riparian rules was long, thorough, intense, contentious at times and ultimately one of the most rewarding efforts of my career. We traveled across the state, visited riparian zones in every forested georegion, looked at the available science and data, and consulted experts from many fields. We looked at current riparian conditions, asked ourselves what future riparian condition would deliver the desired mix of environmental and stream conditions, and considered whether the existing stand was on a trajectory to deliver those conditions. Where we felt georegions had different stand conditions, species mixes, disturbance regimes, growing conditions, soils, etc., we tried to tailor the rules to recognize these differences. We recognized that we had to strike a balance, that you couldn't maximize every environmental condition over the long term. We recognized that these systems are dynamic, not static, and considered the influence of disturbances like fire, floods, and landslides. We wanted to ensure that landowners remained economically engaged in managing riparian areas to get to, and sustain, desired riparian conditions.

Our process didn't end with the 1994 rules. First, we wanted to document how we got to the rule recommendations so that later reviews and research could build on what we had done. The publication "The Oregon Forest Practices Act Water Protection Rules Scientific and Policy Considerations" (Lorenson et al., 1994) was the outcome of that effort. Second, we pushed for a much more robust monitoring effort to document current conditions, a baseline, so that changes and trends over time could be tracked. Much of the monitoring and stream survey work done in the mid-1990's, some of which continues to this day, was started to help us understand how the rules were working and whether conditions were improving. Personally, I always felt the monitoring work was the most important measure of effectiveness, because it measured outcomes and trends; a better measure of effectiveness than comparing OR rules to other state's rules or the NW Forest Plan. Finally, we advocated for continuing research to help us answer questions and concerns going forward. The RipStream project, the paired watersheds work, and some of the work to improve culvert designs to better pass fish are great examples of the kind of research we hoped would happen.

What we wanted was to design a new, more effective set of riparian rules, document the science and judgements that were the basis of the rules, monitor conditions and trends over time, and do targeted research to improve the rules and address concerns. It wasn't just a set of rules, we hoped it would form a base for the future. While there have been some surprises

and unexpected results through the years, I think Oregon has been well served by the approach.

That brings me to the question you are considering today, whether to make changes to the riparian rules that apply to the Siskiyou georegion. This georegion has many distinct characteristics compared to other regions. Average site productivity is lower than the other western Oregon georegions. For example, the average site index for the Siskiyou is 81 (base 50 years) compared to 109 for the South Coast (as used in calculating the basal area targets). Riparian forests are less dense, more naturally open and 'gappy' than those found in other portions of western Oregon. Historic stand densities and species mix have likely changed as a result of fire suppression policies. Weather and precipitation regimes are different, resulting in larger basins to support perennial flow and more intermittent fish-bearing streams in the landscape. Like much of eastern Oregon, it is not uncommon for streams to dry up during the warmest and driest portions of the year in the Siskiyou georegion.

I hope you will consider the question before you today consistent with the approach Oregon pioneered in 1994. If there is a question about the Siskiyou region, then go to the Siskiyou and get the data to answer the question. I urge you not to guess and not to model using data from other regions; go to the ground and do the work.

In closing, my purpose in coming before you today was to provide context for you, from one who lived through the history that underpins much of the forest practice rules still in use today. After 25 years, I have gradually come to believe that the continuing commitment to documentation, monitoring, and research to inform policy makers before changing the rules may have been the most important part of our work. I hope you will continue that approach as you consider what to do in the Siskiyou region.

Thank you.