

Testimony of Andrew Miller, President/CEO
Stimson Lumber Company, Portland, Oregon

S. 1784, the Oregon and California Land Grant Act of 2013

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Good morning, Chairman Wyden, Ranking Member Murkowski, members of the Committee. For the record by name is Andrew Miller, President and CEO of Stimson Lumber Company family-owned company based in Portland, Oregon.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before the Committee to discuss Senator Wyden's S. 1784.

The issues being addressed by S. 1784 are complex and have long defied resolution to the satisfaction of Oregon's rural communities which are dying away due to inaction, although the nearly two decade long debate about management of Oregon and California Grant Lands (O&C lands), is meeting the environmental organizations' goal of ending active management on these lands.

We are have arrived at the point where two more decades of debate, or even two more years, are not an option for many families, businesses, and communities in Oregon. They do not have that long to live. Several Southern Oregon Counties are bordering on lawlessness due to lack of resources to support basic public safety services. Congress bears responsibility for this dire situation because the Federal government owns approximately 70% of the land in these Counties and thus determines the economic and social well-being of these communities.

Before continuing I would like to take a moment to acknowledge and thank Senators Wyden, Stabenow, Crapo, Risch, their colleagues in the House, Representatives Walden, Schrader, Herrera, and others for their courageous leadership in seeing that vital private forest roads legislation was included in the just passed Farm Bill.

I use the word "courageous" because that is what will be required to pass O&C legislation which actually works on the ground to bring stability, certainty, and sustainability to Oregon's rural communities. The complex web of laws governing management of O&C lands have offered a treasure trove of opportunity by opponents of active, sustainable management to use the Federal Courts to systematically block actions long promised by the Northwest Forest Plan to successfully grind the harvest level down to virtually nothing today.

It took courage to see that the forest roads legislation made it into the Farm Bill, as there was strong opposition to it from environmentalists who wanted to continue to use litigation under the Clean Water Act to impose new permitting requirements for forest roads on private lands.

I applaud Senator Wyden for his willingness to step into the circular firing squad which O&C lands have become, to propose, and I hope to guide through the Senate, legislation which can be joined with O&C

land legislation already passed in the House, to deliver a solution which restores hope and opportunity to many Oregonians.

Stimson Lumber is a seven generation family operated company, of which I am a member, which was founded in Michigan in the 1850's and began operating in Oregon in the early 1890's when timberlands were acquired in Northwest Oregon. A mill was built near Forest Grove, Oregon on the eve of the Depression. Six mills have occupied this site over the decades reflecting adaptations to changes in timber and wood products markets, timber type, the impacts of the great Tillamook Burn fires, technology innovations, environmental regulations, and Federal Forest management policies.

I have been working in various forestland and mill operations management positions at Stimson and other companies for 32 years.

Stimson today operates seven mills in Northwest Oregon and North Idaho employing 750 people. Stimson owns and manages 175,000 acres in Oregon and 338,000 acres in Panhandle region of Idaho.

We at Stimson are tree farmers who grow a 40-60 year crop. We plan for and make investments with a two generation mind-set. Stimson's employees have a deeply held regard and reverence for the forest and all it provides. They live in and about the forest. It is their home.

There have been tens of thousands, probably hundreds of thousands written pages of study, testimony, and analysis of the issues involved in active management of the O&C lands. Here today are individuals with more experience and knowledge who can speak to legal, forestry, County impact aspects of S. 1784. Oregon Governor Kitzhaber's O&C Task Force brought together experts and diverse interests in 2012 to once again plow the ground of O&C lands. They produced a comprehensive report detailing the book ends of the issues.

This is now simply a political issues. All the facts are out on the table for all to see. There is no reason for further study. It is time for action. Rural Oregonians deserve transparent and honest leadership from the men and women in this Chamber who hold their fate in their hands.

I spent years as a dirt forester.

While I may not have the pedigree in forest sciences of others in this room, or who have contributed to various O&C studies, I have spent enough years walking around in the forest to know that there is a potentially large gap between legislative language and results in the woods.

I also have spent years tangling in court and in state houses with opponents of timber harvest and public and private lands. Their goal of zero harvest and tactics of using complex Federal and State laws achieve their goal through the Courts is clear. It has been for decades.

Your leadership will be measured not by what is written in legislation, but what concrete actions transpire from your legislation in the forest to improve conditions for the communities of rural Oregon, and the lives of the people who live there.

S. 1784 leaves important questions to be answered. Is the projected annual harvest of 300-350 million board feet sustainable? The bill designates one million acres of O&C lands for permanent conservation. The counterbalance is that this harvest level also be sustained indefinitely.

Language around the ten-year project Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is vague from the standpoint of implementation and truly streamlining the legal process which has been so artfully used by opponents of O&C timber harvest to stop, or delay current timber sales.

There are experts in these matters who need to be part of the legislation drafting process to insure that whatever legislation passes actually works for Oregonians, and is not just another kick in the gut to people already doubled over by current Federal practices.

I have concerns, as do many private forestland owners in Oregon, that conservation measures contained in S. 1748, especially those dealing with aquatic resources, which exceed those in place under the Oregon Forest Practices Act governing conservation practices on private forestlands, could result in the "Federalization" of private forest practices regulations in Oregon. I ask that S. 1784 make clear that conservation measures to be applied to O&C lands are unique to those lands, and in no way are intended to impinge on State regulations, or rulemaking processes governing private forestlands.

In closing I would like to again thank Senator Wyden for stepping into fray on this very contentious, yet vital issue, to many rural Oregonians.

Few are entirely happy with S. 1784. This is a process. We all know it. We simply have to persevere. The perfect cannot be the undoing of the good. The pieces of a good, but not perfect solution, to provide sustainability, certainty, opportunity, and hope for rural Oregonians are right in front of us. From industry side I believe there is solid support for a final bill which reflects elements of S. 1784 and the House passed O&C bill. The question is whether the environmental opposition side really wants a solution, or simply wants to continue the political debate and legal jousting to run out the clock on rural Oregon.

Thank you.