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June 3, 2015

Kari Fleisher, President
AFSCME LOCAL 2734
Testimony to Oregon Board of Forestry

Chair Imeson, Members of the Board:

Good morning,

My name is Kari Fleisher. I am here today as a resident of Bay City, Oregon, an employee of Tillamook County, and the President of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees Union Local #2734. As president, I am proud to represent over 125 workers currently employed by Tillamook County. Today I take the opportunity to speak before the members of the board to encourage the consideration of the impact on local services when establishing the management plans for state forests.

As county employees, we provide critical services to our community. These include, but are not limited to health care, social services, economic development, road maintenance, and public safety. All of which are key services that the residents of Tillamook County rely on. When we are unable to provide them, it creates a tangible hardship across the County.

The impact of state timber revenues on these services is not an abstract equation. It is a reality that our brothers and sisters are dealing with daily. When state forest timber revenues fell short at the end of this fiscal year, the union was forced to make a choice by the county. The choice provided was between layoffs or furloughing workers. The members of our union voted to take unpaid furlough days to avoid losing workers in positions that are vital to meeting the needs of the community. Asking workers to take continual cuts to pay is not a sustainable solution to budget shortfalls.

The county and municipal government workers in Tillamook County are crucial in taking care of its citizens and providing the opportunity for a better future. As the Oregon Employment Department has noted, employment has not recovered to pre-recession levels, with only about 75 percent of the jobs lost being restored. To date, our recovery has been hampered by the loss of wood product manufacturing jobs. Less economic activity translates into less revenue for the county. This problem has been compounded in recent years with the steady decline in revenue from federal timber payments.



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The decisions made by this Board will have a major impact on the future of services in Tillamook County. On behalf of our members and the residents of Tillamook County, I encourage you to think carefully about the impact on small communities when forests are placed off limits from active management. Much of the state forestland in our County was transferred from the County to the State to be held and managed as trusts lands for the benefit of local residents. It is troubling to hear that the forest management options being considered by the Oregon Board of Forestry may not provide sustainable revenue to cover the state costs of managing these forests – thereby increasing the possibility the residents of Tillamook County as members of Oregon’s Trust Counties may begin to lose essential services. I ask the board that you adopt the 70/30 conservation zone management approach to better meet the needs of the residents of Tillamook County.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in purple ink, appearing to read "Kari Fleisher".

Kari Fleisher
AFSCME Local 2734 President