

Opinion: Pass bold climate policy to protect Oregon's natural resource heritage

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In this photo taken Nov. 19, 2009, Douglas fir trees left standing after others were harvested for lumber stand on the Van Eck Oregon Forest near Burnt Woods, Ore. (AP Photo/Jeff Barnard) Jeff Barnard

By [Guest Columnist](#)
Ben Deumling

Deumling is the managing owner of Zena Forest Products, a multigenerational family business that works to save and restore the Willamette Valley's endangered hardwood forests.

Our climate is changing and will continue to change. To keep our planet's warming under control, we need strong and bold climate legislation at the local, state, federal and global levels along with widespread private action.

My family and I operate [Zena Forest Products](#), a forest and wood products company in the heart of the Willamette Valley. We manage the largest remaining block of forest in the middle of the valley. We process hardwood logs from our forest in the Eola Hills outside Salem and surrounding areas into high quality flooring and lumber. Our forest also contains the headwaters of three watersheds that provide clean and steady water flows to all of our neighbors.

We have always worked hard to manage a complex and diverse forest ecosystem. But that work has taken on a new urgency in recent years.

We lost more than 10% of our Douglas Fir trees in the last 10 years due to hotter, drier summers, and more sporadic rainfall. All the science points to this trend intensifying. We are working hard to innovate by planting new, climate-resilient tree species, managing our forest to hold as much water in the soil as possible during the summer months, and continuing to develop better markets for the products our forest can provide.

The forest we steward provides benefits to all Oregonians, and we need all Oregonians to come together to address the changing climate that is threatening so much of what we hold dear. Regulating carbon and other greenhouse gases is the single best way to reduce such emissions. That is why my family and our business strongly supported the "clean energy jobs" bill during the last legislative session. And we are eager to see the Legislature bring the concept back -- and pass it -- in 2020.

As a rural natural-resource based business owner, I realize climate legislation may very well impact my bottom line. There is no magical, free solution to this problem. But the cost of inaction will hurt my bottom line much more.

I have lived and worked in this corner of rural Oregon all of my life, and this place is the best home I could ask for. Many of us are doing our part. But not everyone is, and it's time for those large pollution emitters to play by the same rules. I would rather see the cost of carbon rise a little than lose the forests that we call home.

We need our forests to provide clean air, water, recreation, wood products and an intact ecosystem for all Oregonians now -- and for the next generation.

No one piece of climate legislation will be perfect, but this is not a time for incrementalism or equivocation. We must enact bold and sweeping legislation at the local, state, federal and global levels, to deal with our climate crisis. And we need to do it now.