

Statement of Bob Van Dyk of Wild Salmon Center at the Signing Ceremony for the
Private Forest Accord Legislation
May 18, 2022

My name is Bob Van Dyk, and I work for Wild Salmon Center. I'm honored to make some comments today at this celebratory signing of the Private Forest Accord legislation.

Let me start with three thank yous. Thank you first to the Governor for her leadership in making today happen. When her chief of staff brought us together more than two years ago, there were nine forest-policy ballot measures filed. Thanks to the Governor's work convening the parties and supporting our agreement, we averted an expensive and ugly conflict. Because the Governor made this a priority, we made it a priority. So, thank you to Governor Brown, who stuck with us that last week of negotiations to the final hour, even as the building's lights all dimmed because it was the middle of the night.

And my second big thank you is to everyone who supported our conservation efforts these many years – from grassroots activists and volunteers, to the many partner organizations who worked with us, to the donors who stuck with us, and especially to the team at Wild Salmon Center.

Now as a preface to my third big thank you, I'd like to tell you about some of the presentations I have been giving recently on the forest accord. I've been doing meetings with grassroots groups, watershed councils, land trusts, and the like.

After I run through about 20 minutes of slides on the Accord, where I describe the many changes it directs – on stream buffers, steep slopes, roads, beavers, small forestland ownerships, public investment, and more – I usually get the same first question: "how the hell did this happen?"

I think that question is partly an indicator of what my father calls the country's "illness of spirit." When people hear that staunch opponents have agreed to resolve a major conflict and work together, well, people can't understand it. The public's belief in collective progress is low.

Now, when I answer this question of "why," I tell people about a political calculation in the face of ballot measures. Both sides wanted to avoid an expensive and uncertain conflict.

But I also tell them that a big part of "the why" is that leaders in the timber industry stepped up and risked a different path. The PFA would not and could not have happened without key industry leaders taking a chance on a very different way of

making decisions. We have all benefited from them taking that chance. I know that it wasn't always easy; in fact it was hardly ever easy.

So my third thank you is to those forest industry leaders who took that chance, stepped forward, and made this work. I send my appreciation to you, and to your strong and capable team of negotiators who devoted themselves to this work.

As I thought about what else to say today, my mind turned again to something I mentioned at the start of this negotiation: the cheery countenance of Wayne Giesy.

Some of you knew Wayne; I know the Governor did. He died in late 2019 at 99 years of age. Wayne was a champion for the timber industry and for Oregon.

A tribute marking his death had this headline: *Wayne Giesy: 1920-2019 Another Giant Gone.*

That tribute, written by Jim Peterson, said this:

Wayne was from another time. No, Wayne was from another universe.

How so many wonderfully human qualities could be jammed into such a small frame is its own mystery. He wasn't much more than five-feet six-inches tall, but he was one of the biggest men I ever knew. Big in heart, big in generosity, big in character, big in humor, big in determination, with a vice-like handshake and twinkling eyes that told you he was pleased to meet you.

Wayne was also a big, big thinker.

(Jim Peterson, Evergreen Magazine, Sept. 28, 2019)

Most of the time Wayne and I saw things pretty differently. He wanted to see more old growth trees on trucks, and I wanted them in the forest and streams.

But Wayne and I bonded in suffering: You see, we both attended dozens of Board of Forestry meetings over more than a decade.

We both gave testimony over and over. We both languished through inconclusive conversations that literally lasted for years.

So Wayne and I were bored. And exasperated. We commiserated.

But despite what too often seemed to me a trying waste of time, Wayne was always ready with a big grin, a kind word, and optimism for the future.

What's more, as Jim Peterson observed, Wayne always wanted to think big about forests.

I was at first puzzled by Wayne's belief that something big was possible, given how little change was happening at the Board of Forestry in those years. But I eventually realized that Wayne thought big because he had seen big changes during his lifetime. After all, Wayne was in his eighties and nineties when he watched the Board meetings with me.

Wayne had lived more than 50 years before Oregon required replanting of clearcuts, and he lived almost 50 years after the requirement went into effect. He had seen federal forests move from largely reserves toward industrial tree farms and back toward reserves. So he knew big changes could and did happen.

I think Wayne would be delighted by what we are celebrating today, for lots of reasons, but especially because of the range of interests that support this agreement. If Wayne knows about this, he is smiling today.

Wayne, we did something big.

In closing I'd like to address the topic of how we can build on what we did here. How do we sustain the constructive spirit of the Accord? How do we keep things going? Well, hopefully we built some of the structure for a continuing conversation into the PFA program itself. The Adaptive Management Committee will help us have sustained and science-based conversations. And the Mitigation Committee will help us do good things together. But we will also have to invest as organizations and individuals in the staff time it takes to work together.

As we work to implement the PFA, we should also see if there are other conflicts we can avoid or issues we can resolve. We all know how to talk past one another in the media, in the legislature, or at the Board of Forestry. But it may be that some of the goodwill built here, along with our common affection for Oregon, can help us do more.

Because the world and Oregon are changing pretty rapidly.

And there are surely more big things to do.

Thank you.