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Senate GOP leader: Timber deal with environmentalists demoralizing to caucus

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A deal struck between timber companies and environmentalists with the help of Gov. Kate Brown made Republicans' jobs more difficult this session and demoralized the caucus, Senate Republican Leader Herman Baertschiger Jr. said Tuesday.

"These people come into our offices, ask us to do things for them and then turn around and throw us under the bus," Baertschiger said. "You kind of scratch your head and say: who are we fighting for?"

The Republican from Grants Pass said the deal — hailed as historic by Brown — makes the task of blocking a controversial greenhouse gas emissions cap-and-trade bill more difficult.

Baertschiger added that smaller timber companies and those who work in the industry are also not being served by this agreement.

Timber executives did not inform the Senate Republican office that the deal was forthcoming, Baertschiger said, instead leaving them to find out from the announcement Monday morning.

Baertschiger later had a meeting with timber industry leaders Greg Miller and Heath Curtiss and said he "expressed my frustration in their behavior."

"After they left this office I don't know if they're too interested in talking to me again for awhile," he said.

Brown announced Monday that two dozen environmental and timber groups agreed to work toward a science-based management plan for Oregon's forests.

The parties said they hope the memorandum and future collaboration will help avoid timber wars in the courtroom and at the ballot box and put the state on a path toward greater certainty for all involved.

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