

Testimony on HB 2365 House Ag & Natural Resources Committee
March 28, 2019

RE: Support for HB 2365 Funding for Sudden Oak Death

Dear Co- Chairpersons:

Nature of the Request

Our Sudden Oak Death (SOD) Task Force requests an appropriation of \$1.7 million of General Fund to the Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) to support the eradication, treatment and management of the nonnative, invasive sudden oak death (SOD) disease now established in Curry County, Oregon.

The recently Completed (February 2019) Sudden Oak Death Economic Impact Assessment by Highland Economics and Mason Bruce and Girard found as follows:

Funding SOD treatments for a total cost of \$30 million over the next 20 years could offset loss of 1,200 jobs by 2028 and \$580 million in wages from 2028 to 2038.

The SOD Task Force is made up of local, state and federal governments, as well as local tribes and industry associations, from the Association of Oregon Counties, U.S. Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resource Conservation Service, U.S. Forest Service, Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Indians, Oregon Department of Forestry, Oregon Department of Agriculture, Oregon Forest Industry Council, Oregon State University, Curry County, Coos County, Josephine County, Douglas County, City of Gold Beach, and Oregon Association of Nurseries.

Background

Since 2001, a collaborative effort between state and federal agencies and affected landowners have worked to slow the spread of sudden oak death (SOD, caused by *Phytophthora ramorum*) in Curry County. Disease intensification, the introduction of a potentially more virulent lineage of the disease, and funding projections make this a critical point in the program's history.

SOD kills tanoak readily by causing cankers on the main stem of the tree. Here in Oregon, tanoak drives disease spread, as it is highly susceptible and produces many infective spores. This pathogen has a broad host range of over 120 species of trees, shrubs, herbs, and ferns, including several plants native to Oregon's forests (e.g.,

Douglas-fir, grand fir, Oregon myrtle). In Oregon, these plants only become infected when growing near infected tanoaks. SOD was first introduced to Curry County in 1998, most likely through nursery stock. After initial detection, ODF implemented aggressive treatments from 2001 through 2012 that kept pace with disease expansion. Treatment from 2005 to 2012 averaged 650 acres per year, including some treatments that overlapped with commercial timber harvests. Over the last six years, however, an average of 295 acres have been treated annually, contending with larger acreage of new infestation. In 2012 treatment acreage continued to exceed new mortality acreage. However, through 2017, the cumulative infestation has outpaced treatment. Although 2016 and 2017 saw relatively low rates of new infestation, the rapid expansion of SOD in 2013 through 2015 left the region with more than 2,200 newly infested acres. The years 2014 and 2015 showed particularly rapid spread, coinciding with low funding levels.

Of great concern was the discovery of a new, potentially more virulent lineage of the disease in 2015.

The discovery of the EU1 lineage is concerning on two counts: 1) the EU1 lineage causes extensive damage to conifers in Europe (UK), especially on larch, and is considered more aggressive than the established North American (NA1) lineage, and; 2) it could mate with the established NA1 lineage and increase variability in the pathogen population. Since 2015, ODF has prioritized EU1 infestations for full treatment as this lineage of the disease is considered more aggressive to conifers than the NA1 lineage. In 2015 and 2016, single EU1 infestations were detected in each year and 13 acres and 52 acres were treated respectively. In 2017 and 2018, EU1 infestations immediately surrounding these perceived initial infections intensified resulting in large treatment areas next to the 2015 and 2016 infestations. Additionally, outlier infestations were detected but have fewer infected trees within the treatment boundaries. Eradication treatments for EU1 infestations totaled 270 acres in 2017 and 203 acres for 2018. Treatments are underway or planned on the remaining 455 acres of EU1 infestations detected in 2018.

With the help of funds provided by the 2016 legislature to the Association of Oregon Counties, Oregon's Senator Jeff Merkley and State Representative David Brock Smith (R-01) convened an array of stakeholders in a task force aimed at addressing the spread of Sudden Oak Death in March 2017. This significantly expanded the collaborative effort in place since 2001. To build the task force, Merkley and Brock Smith convened local, state and federal governments, as well as local tribes and industry associations, from the Association of Oregon Counties, U.S. Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resource Conservation Service, U.S. Forest Service, USDA Animal and Plant Health

Inspection Service Plant Health, Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Indians, Oregon Department of Forestry, Oregon Forest Industry Council, Oregon State University, Curry County, Josephine County, Douglas County, City of Gold Beach, and Oregon Association of Nurseries. Alternatives for the SOD program are being considered by these agencies and stakeholders. Preventing spread into Coos or other adjacent counties is of high importance because of the potential implications for foreign and domestic trade. Senator Merkley has stepped aside and has been replaced by State Representative Caddy McKeown.

We thank the Legislative Emergency Board for their \$ 1million allocation in 2018 to prioritize the eradication of the EU 1 strain of SOD.

Action Requested

Support the treatment and management of the nonnative, invasive sudden oak death (SOD) disease now established in Curry County, Oregon. The \$1.7 million in funding for the biennium will support key efforts of Oregon's SOD program.

Fund the SOD treatment program through passage of HB 2365 to slow disease spread of the NA1 pathogen and eradicate the EU1 pathogen. –ODF will spend these funds to treat infested sites on the leading edge of the SOD infestation or on sites near the quarantine boundary. \$50,000 of the funding will be used to support the continuing efforts to staff the Sudden Oak Death Task Force.

Respectfully submitted:

Rep. David Brock Smith & Rep. Caddy McKeown, Conveners on behalf of the SOD Task Force