

**Opening Comments by Glenn Casamassa
Testimony before Ways and Means Committee
February 27**

Good afternoon Co-Chairs Taylor and Reardon and members of the committee. For the record my name is Glenn Casamassa and I am the US Forest Service Pacific Northwest Regional Forester. I want to thank the Legislature, Governor Brown and our state agency partners for Oregon's long-standing partnership to protect communities and resources from wildfire; and your more recent commitment and active participation to increase the pace, scale and restoration of the public forests the US Forest Service is entrusted to steward.

In recent years, the State of Oregon has shown bold and innovative leadership in the realm of state-federal forest collaboration. We face similar challenges and share many of the same objectives: How do we lower wildfire risk and better protect our communities? How do we increase active management on our forests? How can we expand economic opportunities for local communities? Each of these shared priorities highlights how interconnected we are and how important it is for state and federal officials to work closely across boundaries.

I am very proud of the results that our partnership with the State of Oregon has and continues to achieve. Due to this success, it is a high priority for me to be here in person and convey my appreciation to this Legislative body and the Department of Forestry. Thank you for this opportunity to let me appear here today to speak directly to our work together and my commitment to leverage each other's skills, capacity and investments into the future.

In Oregon, the Forest Service benefits from being part of the complete and coordinated fire protection system. When a wildfire occurs, we rely heavily on state and local partners to assess conditions when first on scene. We share resources across jurisdictional responsibilities to ensure communities and the highest priority resources are protected. Without question, the recent fire seasons have provided significant challenges in this state. ODFs highly skilled Incident Management Teams and the statewide complete and coordinated system have minimized acres burned in a way that cannot be measured.

This is an exciting time to be a leader in natural resources. We face tremendous challenges: our forests are in desperate need of active stewardship and the economies in many rural communities are

distressed and in significant need of revitalization. To step up and meet this challenge, we must be interconnected as agency partners. The opportunities and challenges we face transcend landownership boundaries and impact people far beyond the border of any national forest. Our future depends on all of us – the Forest Service, the state of Oregon, partners and local communities – working together across boundaries to achieve outcomes at a landscape scale.

In August 2018, Secretary Purdue initiated Shared Stewardship – a strategy developed to increase active management and investment on both public and private lands in alignment with state priorities. ODF has long been a partner in helping the Forest Service to address our mission on non-federal lands. ODF implements multiple grant programs funded by the Forest Service to support management of state and private lands. Our joint aerial survey program for disease and insect impacts has been on-going for more than 70 years; through cooperative fire funding ODF implements defensible space treatments around homes in the Wildland-Urban Interface, and through the urban and community forestry funding ODF works directly with small towns and urban cities alike to improve our urban forests. By providing technical assistance, ODF supports private landowners in achieving their management objective. While Shared Stewardship may be a new concept on the national level, I see it as an opportunity to highlight and ramp up the work you initiated here in Oregon with ODF's Federal Forest Restoration Program.

In 2018, across Oregon's eleven national forests and the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area, we invested \$109 million in federal dollars for restoration activities and produced 428 million board feet, and had approximately nine million annual visits to national forests in Oregon

The state's investments in federal forest restoration have been strategically focused and allowed us to build on the Oregon Model and execute pilot projects in data collection, contracted environmental analysis, fuels reduction treatments, and timber sales. All of this work has laid the foundation for what's possible under Shared Stewardship. Working with our staff, ODF has invested funds to address well-known bottlenecks within our project-level planning processes. One specific example is ODF extended the appointments of seasonal firefighters to lay out timber sales which resulted in our ability to sell more timber volume.

Oregon is home to 26 forest collaborative groups to bring together diverse interests, find common ground, and build greater support for large-scale forest restoration projects. These local groups are

critical to our success. Where collaboration is most mature, three National Forests in Oregon have NOT been litigated in over 10 years on vegetation management projects. Oregon's support of this collaborative process is vital to continue to scale up restoration on federal forests, as it is difficult for the Forest Service to financially support these local efforts.

In March 2016 Governor Kate Brown signed a Master Good Neighbor Authority Agreement. We have Good Neighbor projects underway to improve forest conditions on 10 of the 11 National Forests in Oregon. Under Good Neighbor, we are transferring federal funds to both ODF and the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife to implement work on National Forests. The Federal Forest Restoration Program provides field coordinators to develop and execute Good Neighbor Authority (GNA) projects. Because of this capacity, ODF and the Forest Service have developed project-level agreements totaling:

- \$5.1 million of project work, including timber sales forecast to generate revenue of \$2 million.
- 8 timber sales, totaling 15.7 million board to be sold by June 2019.
- 5500 acres of sale prep completed.

The Good Neighbor Authority is one implementation mechanism for Shared Stewardship. Because of the Legislature's investments in ODF's Federal Forest Restoration Program, and our long standing partnerships in state and private forests we are extremely well-positioned to significantly ramp up our work together through Shared Stewardship.

Looking to the future, I'd like to reiterate the Forest Service's commitment to working closely with our state partners on shared priorities. The work do is inherently interconnected. The more we can collaborate and work together across boundaries, the better positioned we will be to effectively address the challenges we face. The Federal Forest Restoration Program exemplifies bold and innovative leadership to tackle challenges on a landscape scale across administrative boundaries. I am very proud of the successful working relationship we share with our state partners and the work we have accomplished working together. I look forward to continuing this collaboration as we strengthen and advance our partnership in shared stewardship.

I sincerely thank the State of Oregon and ODF for your partnership, and the mutual progress we've been able to make in increasing the pace, scale and quality of restoration on national forests in Oregon. I hope this testimony conveys why I consider it extremely important to be here today. I am committed to continuing federal investments in alignment with state priorities, working closely with ODF and ODFW. By working together we are well positioned to enhance and expand these efforts across broader landscapes.

Thank you again for this opportunity.