



City of Oakridge
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April 1, 2019

House Committee on Energy and Environment
House Bill 3408

Dear Chair Representative Ken Helm and House Committee on Energy and Environment:

The City of Oakridge officially supports the House Bill 3408 to assist the General Fund to Department of Environmental Quality for deposit in Residential Solid Fuel Heating Air Quality Improvement Fund. Air toxics pose a significant risk to public health including an increased risk of cancer, heart attack/disease, immune system damage, nerve damage, birth defects, respiratory diseases and other serious health problems.

Scale of Our Community's Problem

For the last three decades, Oakridge and surrounding communities (Westfir, High Prairie) have been challenged by poor air quality due to high concentrations of particulate matter from woodsmoke. ***When counting both woodsmoke and wildfire contributions, Oakridge's airshed is among the 20 worst air quality communities for fine particulate matter (PM2.5) in the entire United States, on the list with places like Port of Los Angeles and San Joaquin Valley in California.*** Oakridge and Klamath Falls suffer the most from particulate matter pollution in the state. Lakeview, Prineville, Medford, Eugene, Hillsboro, La Grande, Burns and are also at risk of exceeding federal fine particulate standards.

Use of Previous Funds and Successful Outcomes

We are current beneficiaries of funding allocated from the Oregon legislature in the 2017-2019 biennium to Oregon DEQ. In 2018, we were granted \$75,000 in funding that we've been utilizing during this fiscal year to accelerate the woodsmoke mitigation efforts in our community. This funding is serving our community well and assists the following three main project components:

1. Community Engagement, Education and Community Firewood Program

- Assisting in the management and execution of a community firewood program to give community members a subsidized price for dry, seasoned firewood.
- Coordinating and leveraging other funding partners such as utilities, low-income service providers, weatherization groups, community organizations and foundations to support the transition towards modern technologies such as ductless heat pumps.
- Developing and disseminating educational materials focused on burning techniques that minimize smoke impacts to assist in the education of community members.
- Coordinating education program via the school districts.

2. Project Management and Mitigation Plan Implementation

- Executing the elements of program implementation outlined in for Oakridge Woodsmoke mitigation plan.
- Evaluating the health impacts from woodsmoke and coordinating with Oregon Health Authority, Lane County Public Health, Oregon DEQ, and Trillium on health data.

3. Resource Development

- Developing grant applications and receive input and review from stakeholder partners.
- Supporting Oakridge and other Oregon communities in developing statewide legislation to support air quality improvements.

Examples of successful outcomes include:

- The Community Firewood Program has sold 70 cords, helping over 90 households burn clean seasoned firewood during the 2018-2019 winter season. During the February winter storm, the program provided 12 cords of seasoned firewood to 40 households and two warming centers within the community. We have already started collecting wood supply to make more dry, seasoned wood available for heating next year.
- Development of an education toolkit to be used in classrooms in Oakridge as well as other rural communities in Oregon.
- Mitigation program partners Lane Electric and Good for Homes installed 40 ductless heat pumps with 27 units allocated for low-income residents.
- We have submitted grant proposals to 14 philanthropic and public agency organizations for funding of select program elements. We have received a \$45,000 match from Lane County and will know within the next two months whether we have received funding from the U.S. EPA and U.S. Forest Service.

Additional State Funding Needs

In 2017, an Oregon Solutions effort assisted the City of Oakridge in developing a Woodsmoke Mitigation Plan that outlines the remaining work to ensure that air quality improvements for Oakridge's airshed, mainly heating system upgrades, weatherization, compliance, education and community firewood program. This work was updated in late 2018 and recommended approximately \$5 million over five years to implement this program and its project elements to ensure future community health benefits. While we do not anticipate the legislature to fully fund this program, providing rural and urban communities funding to leverage this program efforts is necessary.

Sincerely,



Kathy Nichols Holston
Mayor, City of Oakridge
Board Member, Lane Regional Air Protection Agency
Board Member, Southern Willamette Forest Collaborative

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