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Beaverton, OR 97006
2/5/2020

Dear Senate Committee of Wildfire Reduction and Recovery:

I am writing as a Small Woodland Owner with forestland in Lincoln County and as a citizen who is concerned about the proposals in SB 1516. As I understand the bill, one of the provisions is that up to 35 fire season part time employees will be employed as full time employees if the bill goes forward. Many of these part-time employees are not needed in the off-season and this change would be costly and negatively impact the already stretched Oregon Dept. of Forestry budget as well as reduce their ability to effectively focus efforts to meet local needs. Money that is allocated presently towards prevention and fighting fires would be shifted to non-essential expenses. Oregon's Dept. of Forestry leads one of the best fire fighting systems in the western US and any changes to the system needs to follow the existing fire cost funding model instead of implementing a new tax that targets family forest owners. Passage of this bill which is to add revenue to cover these costs would put more taxes on forestland owners who live in homes on their forestlands. Their taxes would increase by \$10.80 per lot and the money would go to the Emergency Fire Fund, 68% of which is already funded by family forest owners. Because there is no home on our family forestland, this increased tax would not impact us as much as those who do live on their lands; however, I still do not believe this is an equitable and effective use of covering the necessary ODF Emergency Fire Fund. It does not make sense that this is the only landowner group to be taxed for increased fire protection funds. All Oregonians should have a vested interest in deterring and controlling fires as quickly as possible as everyone is impacted by forest fires which occur, not only on private forestlands, but on State and Federal Forestlands so any increased budget amounts should encompass all citizens paying their fair share of the Oregon Forest Land Protection Fund (OFLPF) and retain the core structure of the 2013 Wildlife Protection Act.

SB 1516 seems pre-mature as an in-depth study to evaluate Oregon's fire cost system has been proposed in SB 1536, but neither has that been passed nor has the study been completed, so what resources are truly needed have not been determined.

Another problem in SB 1516 is that it changes the current effective fire protection process that is based on protection being set at local district levels with landowner involvement. As you know, Oregon is a very diverse state with regions that vary significantly in Coastal, Northern, Southern, Desert, Mountain, Central and Eastern Oregon, each having needs peculiar to those areas. The ODF in each area and local landowners are the most in tune with those particular needs so since landowners' properties are at risk, they should be given a say in what the proper level of protection needs to be in their local districts. SB 1516 essentially relegates the level of protection to Salem which cannot efficiently meet the needs of each local area as they may not be aware of the differences and needs within the local areas on a yearly basis or know how needs have evolved due to changes and resources within those communities.

Thank you for considering these points as you deliberate on SB 1516. I hope you will realize that funding needed for SB 1516 should use existing wildfire funding models which combine property and harvest taxes and special assessments instead of being solely based upon special assessments.

Sincerely,
Annabelle Morgan