

Dear Chair and Senate Committee on Wildfire Reduction and Recovery. (Senate Wildfire Bills SB 1514, SB 1516, and SB 1536)

My wife and I own three forestland parcels in Oregon. One is protected by the local rural fire district, and the other two fall within the forest protection of the Oregon Department of Forestry. Our forestry fire protection is paid for through the forest fire funding model and home fire protection through Rural Fire District property taxes.

The recent Wildfire Council Report has made some good recommendations to better prepare Oregon for the impacts from wildfire. As the legislature prepares to address some of these recommendations there are several facts they need to keep in mind as legislation is developed.

- Oregon's wildfire fighting system led by the Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) is one of the best, if not the best, in the western US and any changes to the system should be done very carefully.
- Any changes to the current wildfire fighting system should retain the core structure of the 2013 Wildfire Protection Act.
- The shared responsibility fire fighting system in Oregon, which relies on local landowner input and assistance, is why Oregon's system is better than our neighboring states.
- Some of the biggest unresolved issues with the Wildfire Council recommendations are related with determining how will these programs be funded.
 - Oregon's forest owners already pay a higher percentage of fire protection costs than neighboring states.
 - The partnership between Oregon Department of Forestry and landowners, to keep fires small and keep costs down, is a great model that must be maintained.
 - The existing funding sources with a balance of property taxes, harvest taxes, and special assessments combined with balanced general fund contributions has worked well in the past and can continue to work in the future. It is balanced and appropriate. Do not change from this fair and equitable fire protection funding model.
- The Wildfire Committee recommendations, when implemented must be done in a fair and equitable manner with funding that is balanced and fair following the existing fire protection funding model.

Thank you for your consideration as you develop new legislation.

Sincerely,

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