



National Wildfire Suppression Association

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March 17, 2021

The Honorable Jeff Golden, Chair
Senate Committee on Natural Resources & Wildfire Recovery
Oregon State Capitol
Salem, OR 97301

Re: SB 248-1

Chair Golden, Vice Chair Hear and Committee Members:

Introduction

My name is Deborah Miley, Executive Director for the National Wildfire Suppression Association (NWSA) of whom I submit this testimony today. We are a trade association located in Mill City, Oregon that represents 254 member companies across the United States of which a vast majority that are in Oregon. Most of our Oregon members are in rural communities and provide jobs to many in those local communities.

NWSA office and staff was directly impacted by the Labor Day fires specifically the Beachie Creek Fire having our office evacuated for almost 2 weeks and sustaining heavy smoke damage as a result. A significant number of resources on those fires came from the Professional Private Wildland Fire Services and many remain at work doing wildfire recovery.

In Oregon, the Professional Private Wildland Fire Services provides up to sixty percent (60%) of all resources available to the Oregon Department of Forestry wildland fire response. We provide everything from 20 Person Hand Crews, Heavy Equipment, Fallers, and other specialized equipment through Incident Blanket Procurement Agreements, Incident Response Agreements, and the Interagency Firefighting Crew Agreement.

Utilization of this industry helps provide our state with people who have expertise in wildfire response as well as providing cost effective resources on an as needed basis.

Partnerships

NWSA and its company members have over the past 30 years had partnerships with many of the local districts as well as our federal agency partners performing a variety of services including:

- Prescribed Burning and many have burn bosses qualified to develop and oversee burn plans.
- Hazardous Fuels Reductions
- Other Forest Resiliency Projects
- Wildfire Recovery
- Working with Insurance Industry and Homeowner on Defensible Space Projects.

We have seen the risk involved in fire management practices and have witnessed firsthand the potential for property devastation and loss of life such as occurred this past fire season, therefore we do support the increase in wildfire mitigation projects on all lands.

In Conclusion:

With regards to SB 287 Under Section 21 we would like to see a membership to the Task Force on Wildfire Education Coordination include a member of the Professional Private Wildland Fire Services as we perform a significant amount of the hazardous fuel reduction work as well as response to wildfires in Oregon and can provide input as subject matter experts on those topics from our perspective.

There is a work force that exists currently amongst the forest and wildfire industry that can help meet the goals of these two bills and provide family wage jobs in hard hit rural communities across Oregon. We would hope that as this plan progresses it would keep that industry in mind and help keep it viable for the benefit of our employers, their employees and the agency partners that utilize this industry.

Our folks are also professionally trained for all wildfire related work and meet the requirements of the National Wildfire Coordinating Group Training and hold Incident Qualification Cards.