

Chair Golden, Vice-Chair Heard, Committee Members Kennemer, Patterson & Prozanski,

I write today in support of major elements of SB 762 where they align with the best available science. I urge you to continue to listen to our scientists as the best available science doesn't always align with "common knowledge". Fire is a critical element of the long-term natural cycle in our forests and has been since forests started to evolve around 400 million years ago. That said, given that fire is necessary and will continue in our forests, it is important to know what we should and should not be focused on. First and foremost we need to protect communities, homes, and businesses at risk of climate driven wildfires. This means focusing on a few critical principles:

- * Improve the resiliency of homes and businesses in at-risk areas to ensure they are less likely to burn as a result of sparking. Last year's fires showed examples of how home hardening made a difference between homes surviving and homes burning.

- * Adopt fire-smart programs across Oregon that ensure defensible spacing around homes by reducing fuel loads within 100 feet of homes.

- * Advance land-use planning and regulation to limit construction in highly fire-prone regions. This is standard practice for flood zones and should be similarly regulated for at-risk fire-prone areas.

- * Unhook logging from backcountry wildfire prevention, as they are not related.

- * Discontinue suppressing backcountry wildfires which interferes with the long-term natural processes of forest maturation and increases the risk of major wildfires.

We need to focus our critical resources on strategies that have the highest payoff in human and community safety which means focusing on wildfires that are a direct risk. This will also reduce risks to our fire-fighters and other first responders as well as improving the long-term health of our forests.

Sincerely,
Daniel Frye, PhD
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