

## [A Majority of Oregonians Willing to Pay for Increased Investment in Wildfire Prevention and Forest Management](#)

Apr 9, 2021



A recently conducted opinion research survey shows Oregonians are extremely concerned about the risk of wildfire. Seventy-four percent of people surveyed were extremely or very concerned about the destruction of homes associated with wildfires, while 68 percent were concerned both about loss of human life and harm to forest health.

The survey was conducted between February 22-March 1 by FM3 Research on behalf of nonprofit organizations 1000 Friends of Oregon, Resources Legacy Fund, Sustainable Northwest and The Nature Conservancy.

The survey found groups ranging from Republicans living in small towns and rural areas to urban-dwelling Democrats were willing to fund solutions to address the threat of wildfire and its aftermath.

“Oregonians of all backgrounds, political beliefs and walks of life recognize the significant risk wildfires pose to everything from our homes to wildlife habitat,” said Greg Block, president of Sustainable Northwest. “People understand we need to invest in maintaining our forests for our own health and safety as well as for Oregon’s economic wellbeing.”

According to the poll, which surveyed likely voters through a combination of phone interviews and online surveys, Oregonians are particularly supportive of efforts that would restore forest health to promote resistance to wildfire through thinning overgrown forested areas and conducting prescribed fires. Survey respondents also flagged protecting drinking water quality, encouraging the creation of defensible space around homes in fire-prone areas and increasing resources available to firefighters as priorities.

“Firefighters put their lives on the line to protect people, homes and businesses in extremely dangerous conditions. That is not a long-term solution – we need to build a more wildfire resilient Oregon that protects people, natural resources, the land on which we grow food and fiber and critical infrastructure. Oregonians have told us they are willing to invest in that,” added Russ Hoeflich, executive director of 1000 Friends of Oregon.

Most survey respondents also recognized that the increase in wildfire activity over recent years is a sign that Oregon has not done enough to address the threats posed by catastrophic wildfire. Recognizing the urgent need to invest in improved forest management, 73 percent of respondents said they were willing to pay an annual fee of \$10 per year per household, perhaps as a new mandatory fee on homeowner’s insurance policies. A clear majority – 55 percent – indicated a willingness to pay as much as \$50 annually per household to improve the state’s wildfire readiness and response. This would provide a meaningful investment in Oregon’s wildfire resiliency.

“Oregon is experiencing more intense fire seasons, and our forests and the communities in and around them are becoming more vulnerable to severe impacts,” said Jim Desmond, Oregon state director for The Nature Conservancy. “Oregonians know that we need comprehensive, science-

based solutions to address wildfire that make our landscapes and communities more resilient, and they're willing to pitch in to get that work done.”

Oregonians also have significant concerns about public health impacts related to widespread smoke. It was also clear through the survey that Oregon residents have a general understanding that our drinking water comes from our forested areas, so efforts to prevent erosion and other sources of water contamination that result from wildfires benefit urban and rural areas alike.

“Protecting the quantity and quality of drinking water is a significant and growing concern throughout the West,” noted Michael Mantell, president of Resources Legacy Fund. “Ensuring our forests are sustainable and healthy through science-driven management will go a long way toward securing the safe water we need in a warmer, drier future.”

Belinda Brown, tribal partnerships director with the Lomakatsi Restoration Project and member of the Kosealekte Band, Ajumawi-Atsuge Nation (Pit River Tribe), concluded, “Protecting communities and natural resource values in southern Oregon from future extreme wildfire events will take significant investments in forest restoration and community preparedness. Practices like increasing defensible space, ecological thinning and application of prescribed fire — which indigenous people have been doing for thousands of years — can keep our communities safer, provide living wage jobs and protect cultural beneficial resources and the ecosystem services we services we all depend on.”

## Poll: 73% of Oregonians willing to pay more money to fund state wildfire fighting resources

By Tim Gruver | The Center Square

Apr 14, 2021



A cluster of Oregon trees in eastern Marion County overlook soil blackened by the state's 2020 Labor Day wildfires which ravaged around a million acres statewide.

Tim Gruver/The Center Square

(The Center Square) - More than seven out of 10 Oregonians are willing to pay more in taxes to keep local wildfires at bay as the state braces for another hot fire season, a recent poll found.

From September through October, Oregon saw 21 major wildfires rip through 1.2 million acres, burning 4,000 homes and killing at least nine people. Their damage stands at **\$1.15 billion**, according to the state's Wildfire Recovery Council. Their toll to Oregon's most disadvantaged communities is far greater.

Four towns—Talent, Phoenix, Gates, and Detroit—were **all but destroyed** in the blazes, taking some 1,800 mobile home units with them.

In January, Gov. Kate Brown's office reported around 1,000 survivors were holed up in hotel rooms while another 178 were living in federally-provided trailers. State officials expect Oregon could qualify for up to \$365.2 million in federal assistance, but it's clear to state lawmakers that more money is needed for the wildfire seasons to come.

Brown's proposed two-year budget sets aside around \$189.5 million for wildfire recovery efforts and \$170 million of lottery bonds for rebuilding more affordable housing, infrastructure, and community development.

One poll conducted by FM3 Research finds most Oregonians would be willing to pull even more money out of their own pockets to fight wildfires. The February survey was commissioned by four nonprofit groups—1000 Friends of Oregon, Resources Legacy Fund, Sustainable Northwest, and the Nature Conservancy.

Pollsters interviewed 845 likely Oregon voters split across urban, rural, and party lines about whether they would pay a theoretical \$10 to \$50 annual fee on their homeowner's insurance policy to fund the state's wildfire readiness.

About 73% of respondents said they would be willing to pay the \$10 rate, while 55% of respondents were okay with the \$50 rate. Across Oregon's 1.6 million households, that mean between \$11.68 million and \$44 million for state coffers.

Among respondents' chief concerns about wildfires, pollsters found, was loss of homes, loss of life, and loss of natural habitats. Around 56% of respondents described wildfires' affect on their lives as "moderate" to "a great deal."

Dylan Kruse, government affairs director at Sustainable Northwest, said he's not surprised so many Oregonians care so much about the state's forests.

"We saw strong numbers there that people understand this issue," Kruse said. "They want to do something about it, they don't want to wait any longer, and they're willing to pay for it. The fact that they're willing to pay up to \$50 per year is not an insignificant amount for the state."

Those numbers matter even more when Oregonians disagree over what's driving worse wildfire seasons. State authorities attribute last season's wildfires to dry weather, lightning strikes, and at least one case of arson. On the left, the culprit is manmade climate change. On the right, it's decades of poor forest management.

For Joe Moll, executive director of Oregon's McKenzie River Trust, the two are inseparable. The real dilemma, Moll said, is how society has chosen to live with nature, which can mean planning forests around roadways, not wildfires.

"People are concerned about where trees are cut along the roadway, but the issue really isn't about the trees," Moll said. "The issue is where we've built the roadways. We choose to live in such a way that allows for tremendous amounts of travel and freedom. All of these wonderful things contribute to climate change."

If forecasts prove true, Oregon could have another long, hot wildfire season in store this year. Data from the U.S. Drought Monitor show the state is seeing exceptionally dry weather, one which Brown declared an emergency in Klamath County this month. The USDA also shows snowpack in the Cascade Mountains from Mount Hood to Diamond Peak is **88% of average** which pose great risk to Northern Oregon reservoirs.

Oregon State University's fifth annual **climate assessment** published earlier this year found Oregon's 90 degree weather days have stretched by as much as three weeks to the south and eight days in Portland since 1940. This weekend, Oregonians in the Willamette Valley will see temperatures reach the high 70s two months before the first day of summer.

A **number of bills** in the Oregon Legislature addressing all of the above are expected to work their way to Brown's desk. On Friday, the House passed a host of bills exempting residential wildfire rebuilding from **construction taxes** and allowing wildfire survivors to prorate their **property taxes**.

Moll says the future of Oregon's forest health depends on resolving the tug of war over **timber rights** in the state, which will take a great deal of solidarity to end.

"One of the things we face is the patchwork of disjointed ownership associated with private and public lands," Moll said. "I think what fires do is show you that those boundaries really mean nothing. It's really going to demand that we come together in good faith on behalf of the land and on behalf of the communities."

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The Jefferson Exchange

# Poll Shows Oregon Support For Fire Prevention, Forest Management

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After the last several fire seasons, there's a strong sense that things can't be allowed to keep happening the same way. Smoke was bad enough, then flames destroyed nearly 2500 homes in Jackson County in one day.

In that context, it's not surprising to learn that a recent poll shows a majority of Oregonians willing to pay for increased investment in wildfire prevention and forest management.

We explore the implications of the poll and how the wishes expressed can be carried out with [State Representative Pam Marsh](#) of Ashland. She is joined by Marko Bey of [Lomakatsi Restoration Project](#) and Dylan Kruse from [Sustainable Northwest](#), whose programs include managing forests for ecological and economic benefits.

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## The Jefferson Exchange Team

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## [Newsmakers 4/8/21 - Dylan Kruse](#)

POSTED ON APRIL 8, 2021

Dylan Kruse from Sustainable Northwest joins Brent and Dave to discuss a New Poll: Oregonians Willing to Pay for Wildfire Prevention and Forest Management. Also, Sgt Mike talks about KYKN moving forward in the new year, and what we might do in programming.