

## **For Immediate Release**

April 5, 2021

### **Contact**

Nina Erlich-Williams, [nina@publicgoodpr.com](mailto:nina@publicgoodpr.com)  
541-230-1973, C: 415-577-1153

### **New Poll: A Majority of Oregonians Willing to Pay for Increased Investment in Wildfire Prevention and Forest Management**

*Citing need to protect forest health and drinking water and provide resources for firefighters, Oregonians of all political parties, geographic areas and demographics support effort*

**Portland, Ore.** – 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, 2021 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 all depend on.”

Contact Nina Erlich-Williams at [nina@publicgoodpr.com](mailto:nina@publicgoodpr.com) or 541-230-1973 to arrange an interview with knowledgeable spokespeople about the impacts of wildfire or from any of the organizations that commissioned the survey. A topline summary of the survey, “Oregon Voter Views of State Investment in Wildfire Prevention,” is available [here](#).

[1000 Friends of Oregon](#) was founded by Henry Richmond and former Governor Tom McCall in 1974. The group works with Oregonians to enhance our quality of life by building livable urban and rural communities, protecting family farms and forests, and conserving natural areas.

[Resources Legacy Fund](#) has worked since 2000 for conservation of land, ocean, and water resources, climate change resilience, and conservation funding and policies that benefit all communities.

[Sustainable Northwest](#) focuses on supporting healthy landscapes and cityscapes, resilient economies, and engaged communities. The organization was founded in 1994 to pioneer natural resource solutions that work for people and nature.

[The Nature Conservancy](#) is a global environmental nonprofit working to create a world where people and nature can thrive. It was founded in the U.S. through grassroots action in 1951.

###