

May 19, 2021

**TO:** Senator Kathleen Taylor, Co-Chair, Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources

Representative Jeff Reardon, Co-Chair, Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources

**SUBJECT:** Support for fully funding the Federal Forest Restoration Program in the Oregon Department of Forestry

The undersigned organizations are writing to express our support for full funding of the Oregon Department of Forestry Federal Forest Restoration Program (FFRP) in the 2021-2023 biennium budget. This investment is critical to increasing the pace, scale, and quality of restoration of Oregon's federal forests. FFRP provides financial and technical support to local forest collaborative groups, issues contracts to increase the pace of project approval, and develops and implements Good Neighbor Authority projects. This comprehensive suite of integrated resources accomplishes diverse outcomes and deliverables that could not be achieved in isolation. Since the program's inception, the state's investments have been leveraged 2:1 by federal dollars.

More than 60% of Oregon's forests are managed by the U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management. These forests provide diverse economic opportunities, clean air and drinking water, critical wildlife habitat, and recreational experiences. However, recent research has suggested that over 4.5 million acres of federal forest lands in Oregon are in need of active management to achieve resilient landscapes. Changes in forest management over recent decades has also resulted in the loss of much of the state's forest products infrastructure and associated jobs. Furthermore, Oregon, like many other western states, has experienced a significant increase in the scale, severity and duration of large wildfires. The past decade of fire seasons that start earlier, end later, and burn significantly more acres has strained the state's fire suppression capacity and proved that more must be done to proactively address the risk posed by unhealthy, unnatural conditions in dry, fire prone forests.

The Federal Forest Restoration Program works to support the development of a sustainable forest products infrastructure that provides living wage jobs in restoration and stewardship of federal forests through collaboration, innovative partnerships, and integration of science into planning and management. The program seeks to enhance fish and wildlife habitat, reduce risk of uncharacteristic wildfire, and produce timber supply for mills and forest products companies. Oregon pioneered the model of forest collaboration that has expanded across the West and we take pride in moving beyond an "us versus them" mentality towards a "triple bottom line" solutions-oriented approach.

In addition to collaborative project development and planning acceleration, the program has fully enabled implementation of the Good Neighbor Authority agreement that Governor Brown signed in 2016. As a result, the state currently has 26 active Good Neighbor agreements with 10 National Forests, 1 Bureau of Land Management district, and USFS Region 6 for a total of \$18.6 million in projects. Coupled with support for the state's network of federal forest collaboratives, the increased investment and use of new tools will support additional partnerships between local groups and state and federal land managers and enable greater returns and benefits to the State of Oregon and partners.

We appreciate the state's work to implement the Federal Forest Restoration Program and strongly encourage the legislature to continue this groundbreaking effort. Full funding for the Federal Forest Restoration Program in the 2021-2023 biennium is integral to improving the health and resilience of our state's public forest lands, reducing wildfire risk and threats to human health and safety, creating and sustaining restoration and stewardship jobs in rural communities, protecting unique habitat for fish and wildlife, and restoring public lands for the benefit of all Oregonians.

Thank you for supporting this important program in the Oregon Department of Forestry budget.

Respectfully,

Blue Mountains Forest Partners  
Central Oregon Forest Stewardship Foundation  
Central Oregon Intergovernmental Council  
Crook County Natural Resources  
Deschutes Collaborative Forest Project  
Hood River Forest Collaborative  
Intermountain Wood Energy  
Iron Triangle  
Lake County Resources Initiative  
McKenzie Watershed Stewardship Group  
Northern Blues Forest Collaborative  
Ochoco Forest Restoration Collaborative  
Ochoco Lumber  
Southern Oregon Forest Restoration Collaborative (SOFRC)  
Southern Willamette Forest Collaborative  
Sustainable Northwest  
The Nature Conservancy  
Wallowa County  
Wallowa Resources  
Wasco County Forest Collaborative  
Wasco County SWCD  
Western Environmental Law Center  
Wild Rivers Coast Forest Collaborative