

Chairs Reardon and Taylor and members of the Joint Subcommittee on Natural Resources, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on SB 5518, the Oregon Department of Forestry Budget.

Silver Butte Timber Co. & C&D Lumber Co. are opposed to the language in the current budget that proposes changing funding for administrative costs for ODF from 100% General Fund to a 50/50 split between private landowners and the General Fund, because it eliminates the recognition that private landowners provide millions of dollars every year through in-kind resources. As a small privately owned company we have a strong connection to our land base and feel a duty to protect the resources that we manage. We feel that this language in SB5518 disregards our efforts and commitments to properly managing our forestlands and puts an increased financial burden with no additional benefit to us as the landowner.

Every year, private landowners pay roughly \$30 million dollars for fire suppression in Oregon PLUS contribute their own trained personnel and equipment estimated to be worth \$14.5 million per year. That includes maintained water sources, maintained road systems, water tenders and engines, hose and fire tool caches, and trained personnel. These resources are often brought to bear during fire season and are widely regarded as invaluable additions to the Department's resources and the epitome of the complete, coordinated fire protection system that is unique to Oregon.

The 2020 Labor Day fires were a great example of the benefit of those contributions. The private sector contributed over 750 trained personnel and over 350 pieces of high value fire equipment that the State of Oregon did not have to pay to train, own, or make ready. Silver Butte Timber & C&D Lumber have suffered resources losses from fire the last three consecutive years. We have assisted the state and local agencies with fire suppression by bringing contractors in from other projects to assist us in defending our timberlands. We also have actively shared our familiar knowledge of the ground to help better fight fire as well as guided equipment to actively construct Fireline to protect our timberlands.

This fund shift proposed in the budget ignores the very real, and significant contribution of our industry and increases costs at a time when landowners losses have never been higher, an average of 20% in the timberland assessment rates and a 45% increase in the average grazing rates – and get nothing for it. Not a single additional hose, not a single additional dozer. Nothing.

Even the recent Earth Economics Wildfire Funding Study commissioned by the Legislature in 2020 recognized these contributions: "the General Fund allocates funds for ODF administration, the 'admin prorate,' on behalf of private landowners, in recognition of their contribution of highly trained staff, infrastructure, and firefighting assets that help the districts meet their fire protection goals." Furthermore, the study made a recommendation to convene an in-kind workgroup to formally address outstanding questions about the nature and benefit of in-kind services provided by private landowners in support of Oregon's wildfire management strategy. This fund shift is premature and would create change before that effort begins.

Given that the general public is responsible for 93% of human caused fires to which ODF responds (and the 10 year average is 95%), it is totally appropriate that the General fund pick up the admin pro-rate, as it recognizes that forestland owners and their operations are NOT driving ODF's workload.

Please oppose this change.

Thank you



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