

TO: Co-Chair Kathleen Taylor, Co-Chair Jeff Reardon, and Members of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means Sub-Committee on Natural Resources

SUBJECT: Small Woodland Owner Perspective on the ODF Budget

We are small woodland owners with land in Lane, Benton, and Lincoln Counties. Our primary concern with the proposed ODF budget is that the public has not been given enough information on the budget to understand its implications for fire funding. The questions we would like answered, and that we believe legislators should ask are as follows:

1. Does the proposed ODF budget support revoking ORS 321.012 that mandates a public/private cost share for fire funding? We are opposed to that revocation which is a part of the proposed HB 2379.
2. Does the proposed ODF budget maintain the Oregon Forest Land Protection Fund (OFLPF) that has served Oregon so well for over fifty years? The many benefits of this fund include but are not limited to private sharing of the cost of large fires; annual funding for special appropriations for fire-fighting resources, primarily aerial; strategic investments to enhance ODF's ability to fight fire, as exemplified by the aerial infra-red protection system; establishment of rules on which kinds of fire costs are eligible for reimbursement on large-fires through the public/private partnership and the OFLPF; monitoring and tracking large-fire costs; auditing the specific costs of each individual large-fire (this function paid entirely by land owners.) We are in favor of maintaining the OFLPF.
3. Does the proposed ODF budget incorporate the proposed shift of payment for administrative to private landowners? Currently this cost is funded by the General Fund in compensation for the in-kind services (private equipment, on the ground resources such as heli-ponds and pump-chances, and manpower trained to fight fire) provided by private landowners. We are opposed to this shift. One might think that only large landowners provide these in-kind services, but that is a misconception. Even small woodland owners provide services. As an example, on our own tree farm we have hand-built a half mile of fire trail along a rail line and maintain it annually; pruned our trees to prevent ladder fuels; maintain a fire pond; maintain road and trail access to neighboring federal and state properties for fire-fighting purposes; and are active members of the Fire Protection Districts that serve our properties.