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To: Joint Committee on Ways and Means--Subcommittee on Natural Resources
From: Lauren Anderson, Forest Climate Policy Coordinator, Oregon Wild
Re: Oregon Department of Forestry Budget
Date: 5/19/21

Dear Co-Chairs Senator Taylor and Representative Reardon and Members of the Subcommittee,

The two biggest steps Oregon can take to confront the global threat of climate change are to protect and grow its forests to sequester more carbon, and to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions from logging. Studies estimate that annual logging-related emissions average 33 million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent per year since 2000. This means that logging is the largest source of emissions in the state (more so than the 23 Mmt CO₂-e/yr attributed to transportation). These studies also show that climate-smart forestry in Oregon could increase the net ecosystem carbon balance by 56 percent by 2100.

Further, Oregon's forests protect vulnerable communities from flooding and mudslides, and ensure the state has abundant clean, cool drinking water. Healthy forests are important for all Oregonians, and you must act to protect and restore these incredible ecosystems in a manner that places climate change and environmental justice at the forefront of the agency's work. I am writing today to request that you fully recognize this potential, and ensure that the Oregon Department of Forestry is well positioned to meet the climate crisis needs of the 21st century.

Package 160 — Forest Climate Change Mitigation & Adaptation: The Department of Forestry needs additional capacity to fully implement the Governor's executive order on climate change — otherwise known as the Oregon Climate Action Plan (OCAP) — and meet its statutory requirements in addressing the need to mitigate climate change and adapt to its impacts. Within the agency, the Planning and Analysis Unit (PAU) has been focused on developing the Oregon Department of Forestry's (ODF's) Climate Change Carbon Plan, a significant undertaking. This Plan can be used to frame what a future Oregon Department of Forestry could become — a national leader in climate-smart forestry. Therefore, the agency requires multiple additional full-time staff to fully realize the potential of this effort, including a full-time position to partner with DEQ on design of a forest offsets program, and should be funded at the level they requested (\$3,227,675).

Package 172 — Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion: The Oregon Department of Forestry must evolve to meet pressing societal needs around diversity, equity, and inclusion. Therefore, I ask that you grant the agency's request to create the following three new staff positions focused on this work: An Environmental Justice Coordinator, Sustainability Coordinator, and Liaison to Tribal Governments Coordinator. These three new positions will support the agency's work around environmental justice and tribal outreach, critical work for meeting the needs of all Oregonians. While ODF believes that the Environmental Justice and Sustainability Coordinators can be hired on a half-time basis, I believe these positions should be full-time in order to meet

the needs of the agency and fully implement the Oregon Climate Action Plan. Therefore, while the agency requests \$452,433, I respectfully request \$680,000 to ensure all three of these positions can be fully funded.

Urban and Community Forestry Program

As written, the proposed budget for ODF actually subtracts a position from the private forest program, specifically for Urban and Community Forestry. This position should remain in place, as this program is also critical for climate action and environmental justice. Further, the agency should receive more funding for its Urban and Community Grants Program to effectively support community tree planting efforts. The urban forestry program ensures communities have trees to filter and retain stormwater, protect healthy streams, mitigate heat island effects and enhance neighborhoods and property values.

Community Wildfire Protection Plans

Further, I request report language requiring ODF to further focus Community Wildfire Protection Plans on community defense instead of distant fuels reduction efforts. Fires are being driven by extreme weather conditions and fuel load is not always a key factor (especially on the westside temperate rainforests) in how severe and damaging these fires are. Far more effective strategies for saving lives and property include investing in educational and outreach efforts around the need for home hardening, defensible space and evacuation planning, especially for disadvantaged communities. Only after these needs are met should ODF focus on hazardous fuels reduction beyond the home ignition zone (100 ft).

Right now, ODF's proposed thinning projects in the name of fire prevention would cost the state billions. This money would be far more effective at saving lives and livelihoods if it were focused on:

- Increased emergency planning and preparedness for rural communities located in and near forested areas. This includes well established evacuation routes, designated "safe" areas where people can shelter in place, and established channels of communication where residents can go for trusted information. Wildfire information should be made available in Spanish and other Indigenous Latin American languages to ensure that our most vulnerable populations, including migrant and Latinx communities living and working in rural areas, are prepared for fire emergencies.
- Increased fire-wise home hardening and retrofitting (i.e. application of construction design and materials that are fire resistant). Hardening homes to fire can be > 95% effective at preventing structure loss. Wind-driven fire events can ignite homes from flying embers miles ahead of the fire front, and there are examples of home burning even though the actual fire was never in direct contact with the buildings.
- Reduced fuels in the home ignition zone. Reducing fuels in close proximity to houses (within 100 feet of the home) can help protect property from damage in the event of a fire.

- Ensuring disadvantaged communities have equal access to resources. It is the most vulnerable populations that carry the highest costs when a fire impacts a community. Investing in air filtration systems for disadvantaged communities is an affordable and effective way to ensure vulnerable people have a safe space to shelter from smoke inhalation and the associated health impacts.
- Avoiding or minimizing actions that increase fire hazard such as clearcutting and dense monoculture replanting. Encourage more thinning and longer rotations on plantations as these forest management strategies will reduce the proportional area of forest in the most vulnerable dense, young fuel conditions.

Thank you for your consideration of these important factors.

Sincerely,

Lauren Anderson
Forest Climate Policy Coordinator
Oregon Wild