

Response to questions from the Senate Committee on Natural Resources on March 27, 2023



By changing the process for publicly releasing the wildfire map, who gets notification by letter, changing what the letters say, and going from 5 zones to 4, does the department plan on bringing a new RAC together? Essentially will you be starting this whole process over?

SB 80 will require the department to amend certain rules specific to notifications, hazard zones, and the appeals process. A diverse RAC will be formed to provide input on any proposed rule language, as well as evaluate the fiscal impact of such rules. HB 2001 provided direction to state agencies on composition for a rules advisory committee. The department will follow that direction, as well as include representation from areas that have previously been identified as the higher hazard classes.

Section 1, (10) on page 3 states that the Department will ensure a process that is "interactive and does not consist solely of delivering information in a top-down manner with the public." What does that mean?

The department interprets this as engaging the public in a way that allows for conversation, soliciting input, evaluating that input, and incorporating input into final products. ODF will solicit the services of a facilitator to assist with designing this process and facilitating discussions to help the department be successful. For example, providing opportunities at town halls to receive feedback on any draft map. Public engagement and meaningful input are important to the department.

Section 1, (11) on page 4 states that the department shall meet with county commissioners and staff 8 times throughout the state before the map is "released." Can you explain what the timeline is that you plan on using for this.

This requirement is dependent on wildfire season severity to an extent, but as expediently as possible. We don't have an exact timeline yet. Development of a timeline will be closely coordinated with the Association of Oregon Counties (AOC) and the Wildfire Programs Advisory Council (WPAC).

If the department is tasked with having an interactive process and not a top-down one, during the meetings with County Commissioners and staff, will you ensure their input and concerns are factored into the map before it is released for the public comment period?

Yes. Comments and concerns received will be considered for integration, and if not integrated, an explanation of why will be provided..



During the first map process, it appeared that the Department handed the process off to OSU and nothing was really changed when concerns were raised, is the department's plan to do something similar this go around?

ODF worked jointly with OSU and will continue to work with OSU on exploring technical adjustments in response to feedback received.

Section 1 (12) on page 4 states that the department will accept comments on the map from the public. What will this process entail, simply releasing it for public comment in writing or are you doing a series of public hearings—like what the department did after the first map attempt?

The department is planning on conducting a review with the public surrounding the impacts of proposed rules prior to any draft rules being presented to the Board of Forestry. The timing of such town halls will be coordinated with local government officials to the extent practical. Additionally, there will be an extended comment period available regarding the rulemaking process in accordance with the Administrative Procedures Act. In addition to the public comment period for the administrative rules, the Department will be holding public meetings on the initial draft of the map in the highest hazard areas prior to releasing a final map for notifications and appeals.

Have questions or need more information?

Derrick Wheeler, Legislative Coordinator
Oregon Department of Forestry
Derrick.Wheeler@odf.oregon.gov
(971) 375-1258

