



March 2, 2023

To: Senator Michael Dembrow, Co-chair, Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources

Representative Khanh Pham, Co-chair, Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources

Re: HB 5020 – Oregon Department of Forestry Budget

Co-chairs Dembrow and Pham:

Sustainable Northwest appreciates the opportunity to provide our recommendations for the 2023-2025 Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) Budget. In addition to the programmatic and funding recommendations below, we encourage the Subcommittee to coordinate with ODF to determine what additional capacity and position authorities may be necessary to fully maximize receipt and implementation of historic resources made available under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021 and Inflation Reduction Act of 2022. These bills provide opportunities for significant federal investment in forest restoration and wildfire risk reduction, including competitive grants that require non-federal match, U.S. Forest Service State & Private forestry allocations, and U.S. Forest Service Good Neighbor Authority allocations. However, these increased investments and timely implementation of federal resources will only occur if sufficient state agency capacity exists to receive and deploy them as opportunities emerge.

### **2023 – 2025 Oregon Department of Forestry Budget Priority Recommendations**

**Landscape Resilience Program:** Created in 2021 by SB 762, the Landscape Resilience Program invests in large landscape restoration projects across Oregon. Because the scale of the restoration need is large, this program meets this challenge at scale by targeting investment in large landscapes most at risk from uncharacteristic wildfire. The program has catalyzed diverse interests to collaborate on actions that use prescribed burning, mechanical thinning, and other treatments to increase the ecological integrity of forested ecosystems and their resilience to wildfire, which can help increase the safety and preparedness of nearby communities.

The Landscape Resilience Program was funded at \$20 million for 2021-2023, but reduced by nearly \$8 million in the Governor's Recommended Budget for 2023-2025. Given the scale of remaining need and significant match funding opportunities, SNW requests that this program's funding be restored to the full \$20 million as requested in the ODF Agency Request Budget. The Landscape Resilience Program is eligible to provide the requisite 25% non-federal match to the Community Wildfire Defense Grant program and FEMA Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities grant program that received over \$2 billion in funding in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021.

**Small Forestland Grant Program:** Also created by SB 762, the Small Forestland Grant Program is comprised of two grantmaking opportunities: the Small Forestland Grant Program and the Firewise

Community Grant Program, both of which provide competitively awarded grants to support small forestland owners in reducing wildfire risk on their properties. The Small Forestland Grant Program provides voluntary incentives that implement the Cohesive Wildfire Strategy by empowering smaller landowners to improve forestland health, which contributes to larger landscape resilience. In its first year of grantmaking, this program received more requests for funding from small landowners than was available, demonstrating strong landowner demand for assistance.

The Small Forestland Grant Program was funded at \$5 million for 2021-2023, but reduced by \$2 million in the Governor's Recommended Budget for 2023-2025. As with the Landscape Resilience Program, SNW requests that this program's funding be restored to the full \$5 million as requested in the ODF Agency Request Budget. The Small Forestland Grant Program is also eligible to provide the requisite 25% non-federal match to the Community Wildfire Defense Grant program and FEMA Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities grant program that received over \$2 billion in funding in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021.

**Federal Forest Restoration Program:** The Federal Forest Restoration Program (FFRP) has a long and successful track record of accelerating the pace, scale, and quality of forest restoration on federal lands in Oregon. 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 more than 2:1 by federal dollars.

SNW strongly encourages full funding of the Federal Forest Restoration Program, especially the collaborative capacity and Technical Assistance and Science Support (TASS) grants. Collaborative capacity grants ensure that successful forest collaboratives in the state have the capacity they need – whether third-party neutral facilitators, research and monitoring assistance, or the development of zones of agreement – to develop science-based restoration treatments that have broad social agreement. TASS grants help stakeholders answer important scientific questions about land management in order to facilitate public understanding of the effects of land management, which builds social license for restoration actions.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide testimony on ODF's budget and some of the important and necessary programs it administers. Sustained funding for these programs in the 2023-2025 biennium is integral to improving the health and resilience of our state's public and private forest lands, reducing wildfire risk and threats to human health and safety, creating and sustaining restoration and stewardship jobs in rural communities, and protecting unique habitat for fish and wildlife.

For any questions or additional information, please contact me at [dkruse@sustainablenorthwest.org](mailto:dkruse@sustainablenorthwest.org) or (303) 328-7524.

Sincerely,

Dylan Kruse  
Vice President  
Sustainable Northwest