



OREGON FOREST INDUSTRIES COUNCIL
SUSTAINABILITY. SCIENCE. INNOVATION. GROWTH.



Maintain General Fund Support for Wildfire Capacity at ODF

The undersigned represent farmers, ranchers, and foresters from across the state who are invested in protecting our communities and working lands from the threat of wildfire.

The Governor’s Recommended Budget (GRB) for the Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) does not include \$15 million of General Fund contributions allocated to ODF in Senate Bill 762 to offset landowner rate increases for additional firefighting capacity. Instead of funding that capacity through General Fund dollars as SB 762 intended, this budget instead shifts those costs on to private landowners, which is in direct conflict with the spirit of SB 762.

Senate Bill 762 was a recognition that wildfire is an all-Oregonian problem deserving of a statewide policy and investment solution.

The additional capacity at ODF was intended to address statewide needs, and the rate offset explicitly recognized that local landowners should not have to shoulder that burden. Yet, the GRB shifts that responsibility over to the local landowners. This kind of bait and switch results in mistrust between the state and its stakeholders.

As a result of not continuing the General Fund offsets for SB 762 capacity, landowner rates will increase at a minimum of 10-40 percent statewide, depending on where the specific district resides. As just one example, the Salem Fire program costs would increase by 55 percent.

Landowners throughout the state are already under extreme pressure to make their working lands pay for themselves. Even prior to these potential increases, most notably in eastern Oregon, landowners frequently face the decision of whether to replant after a fire and lose money for the next 60-80 years, or let the land convert to other uses like solar or grazing and hope that cattle can pay the bills.

Keeping working lands affordable is the lynchpin to maintaining them as working lands for the benefit of all Oregonians. This is not just a financial issue, it’s good policy. The increases in fire protection rates that will result from loss of the offset dollars will only serve to push landowners closer to the brink of financial insecurity, where many may decide that maintaining their property as a healthy forest is too burdensome.

The willingness for landowners to keep their forests as forestland is also necessary for the sustainability of the critical workforce that additionally participates in firefighting. Anything that jeopardizes the stability of this work risks rural jobs, rural economic stability and the ability for communities to defend themselves against catastrophic disturbance.

Please continue the SB 762 General Fund offset dollars for statewide ODF fire capacity.

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