



April 6, 2023

To: Senator Janeen Sollman, Co-chair, Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Public Safety

Representative Paul Evans, Co-chair, Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Public Safety

Re: HB 5036 – Oregon Department of State Fire Marshal Budget

Co-chairs Sollman and Evans:

Sustainable Northwest appreciates the opportunity to provide our recommendations for the 2023-2025 Oregon State Fire Marshal (OSFM) Budget. In addition to the programmatic and funding recommendations below, we encourage the Subcommittee to coordinate with OSFM to determine what 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 wildfire risk reduction and community preparedness, including competitive grants that require non-federal match. 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 State Fire Marshal Budget Priority Recommendations

Community Risk Reduction and Response Fund (Package 100) - This package establishes four permanent positions (3.52 FTE) and provides \$40 million General Fund to partially continue wildfire risk reduction investments from SB 762 (2021).

Created in 2021 by SB 762, the Community Risk Reduction and Response Fund and associated agency functions provide technical, funding, and planning assistance to communities to reduce risk from fire. Staff and program support build and maintain relationships with partner agencies, stakeholders, and communities to prepare for and adapt to wildfire, while also reducing risk for loss of lives and property. Activities include fire response, investments in Community Wildfire Protection Plan development and implementation, defensible space treatments, evacuation routes, and public education and outreach.

The Community Risk Reduction and Response Fund was funded at \$87 million in 2021-2023, but reduced to \$40 million in Package 100 in the Governor's Recommended Budget for 2023-2025. We commend the Governor for retaining this funding level, and also encourage the Subcommittee to coordinate with OSFM to consider appropriate increases in funding given the scale of remaining need and significant federal match funding opportunities the program provides. It is worth noting that the 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.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide testimony on OSFM's budget and the important and necessary programs it administers. Sustained funding for these programs in the 2023-2025 biennium is integral to reducing wildfire risks and threats to human health and safety across Oregon communities.

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

Sincerely,

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Sustainable Northwest