

On behalf of my family, and of all the victims of the 2020 Labor Day fires, I urge your whole-hearted support for SB 1520. Settlement funds were calculated to compensate for specific losses and - in total - hardly make up for the enormous damages suffered. Taxing that amount is punitive. We really do need access to these resources in order to rebuild and restore.

While we were among the fortunate few whose homes survived, we did lose our garage, bridge, and several acres of forest and landscaping. Being able to return to our home once the worst damage had been fixed was a blessing in many ways, in others it was a curse. For the first 2 years we lived in an industrial logging zone, subjected to the torturous noise and sight of hundreds of log trucks daily roll down the road in front of our house. The crash of burnt trees as they fell all around us echoed from the hillsides and made me shudder.

Wildfire is a disaster that keeps on taking. The damage and loss did not stop once the flames died down. For these past three and a half years I've witnessed this place which used to be my paradise and sanctuary suffer loss after loss -- due to the agonizing slow death of fire damaged trees, to the invasion of noxious weeds, to erosion.

It's not only that the victims deserve to receive that money, but that we and they NEED it. Post-fire recovery is expensive – the purchase of tools and materials, trees, the hiring of contractors and more. It also involves lots of hard work and most of us have probably done the lion's share of the labor ourselves, unpaid and not reimbursed by either insurance or settlement claims. Here are a few examples:

Our son took several weeks off work to help us, bringing tools and materials from his home in Bend. He and my now-81-year-old husband labored for weeks: winched out burnt stumps, cut, loaded and hauled truckloads of burn debris to the landfill. Uncompensated labor.

He had brought his Alaska mill to make lumber from our fallen trees, which he used to construct a handsome garden shed and small footbridge. The next spring, he and his wife peeled two 40-ft doug-fir logs (felled from our hill) for beams, and with the help of one paid assistant, we built a substantial bridge to replace the one that burned. Then there was landscaping, tree-planting, relocating wildflowers, trying to clear the invasives.... All of this unpaid.

We are rightfully proud of all we accomplished. However, these efforts could not be reimbursed by either insurance or the settlement amount.

Wildfire is the disaster that keeps on taking. Fifty- to eighty-year-old trees that still had some green in the winter of 2020-21 have been slowly dying before my eyes. Last month three fire-damaged trees fell across our main irrigation pipe and broke it in two places. The clean up and repair are more expenses. But worse, for me, is the sad loss of these grand old trees, and the shade and habitat they provided.

Since the fire, recovery has dominated my time, my conversations, my mental state. It has consumed most of my energy, and much of my family's financial resources. Being consumed with clean-up and recovery work, we have lost other opportunities. My career as an artist has been neglected. Since the fire, my husband has aged rapidly, and it's been hard to enjoy his "golden years".

Wildfire is the disaster that keeps on ... taking. Taking energy. Taking resources. Taking more trees. Requiring more restoration work. How is one to be compensated for all the intangible losses? Please don't take still more from us, in the form of taxes.

Thank you,

Susan Rudisill