



March 12th, 2025
Letter of Support SB 5521

Dear members of the Joint Committee On Ways and Means, Subcommittee On Natural Resources,

On behalf of the Board, staff, and members of McKenzie River Trust, I am writing this letter in support of SB 5521: Relating to the financial administration of the State Forestry Department (ODF). ODF brings critical expertise and resources to communities across the state especially in response to wildfire activity and prevention.

Each year, McKenzie River Trust and other regional partners benefit from the leadership of ODF personnel while working to advance prescribed fire initiatives in the urban/wild interfaces around Eugene and Springfield, OR. These projects offer numerous human and ecological benefits, including supporting Oregon Conservation Strategy habitats while reducing the potential for severe, high-intensity wildfires by removing built-up fuels, including dense shrubs and thatch. The reintroduction of periodic fire to fire-adapted landscapes improves habitats and makes fire suppression safer, more effective, and less costly if a wildfire occurs.

ODF has been a key partner in prescribed fire activity, providing burn day resources (such as engines, water/tenders, and personnel), training, mentorship, and leading burns by providing burn bosses to support partners across the south Willamette Valley, including government, nonprofit and Tribal land managers. Without their support and leadership, the ability of area land managers to implement controlled burns would be severely limited or even impossible. The knowledge and expertise of ODF staff are invaluable resources to promote habitat health and wildfire resiliency.

ODF responds to wildfires and invests in their prevention by sharing staff resources and managing training programs like the ODF Certified Burn Manager Program. This program is necessary to implement fire resiliency initiatives across the state. In 2024, I completed my ODF CBM training and can attest to the outstanding quality of the training and mentorship I received during the process.

The Oregon Department of Forestry is a statewide leader in building a more fire-resilient landscape for Oregon's communities and forests. All Oregonians benefit from fire prevention efforts. As our state continues to adapt to changing precipitation patterns, ODF's programs and staff are more important than ever in fighting and mitigating future wildfire activity across the state.

Brent Ross,

Land Steward, ODF Certified Burn Manager
McKenzie River Trust

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