



# UNION COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

*Paul Anderes, Commissioner*  
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Chair Manning, vice chair Thatcher, members of the committee,

For the record I am Union County Commissioner Paul Anderes. I also have fought fire across the western United State for over 20 years, on both engines and hand crews.

It is an honor to sit before you today.

I appreciate Senator Nash bring this bill forward. My hope is at that end the testimony in support, you will be in a position of support this bill and the associated fiscal that will be necessary to implement this legislation.

The goals of this bill are to allow Oregon Department of Emergency Management to:

1. Increase mobile storage of fuel
2. Provide a more permanent solution to storage needs
3. Provide a more modern bulk tank to aircraft (fuel delivery trucks)
4. Build capacity in the loaner fleet of vehicles

For Background:

- For many years Union County & Harney County airports (County owned airports) supplied fuel to wildfire aircraft – retardant planes. Those planes were propeller planes. We had capacity for meet the needs of planes – up until a few years ago. The aerial firefighting fleet has for the most part converted to jets. The jets consume significantly more fuel and they make much quicker trips.
- Licensed CDL drivers are in short supply and tend to run up against driving hour limitations.
- The Rack (the regional bulk storage facilities) are located in Portland, Seattle and a smaller one in Spokane.
- Neither of the two airports have regular commercial air service, so we are ordering fuel on an as needed basis on the open market. Union county Public Works Director/Airport Manager will address this in more detail in his testimony.
- Union County has not run out of fuel, but we have gotten low enough that the USFS Tanker Base has sent aerial assets to other locations, increasing the response time to fires.

Wildland fire:

As noted I have over 20 summers fighting wildland fire. There is nothing much better than hearing that there is aerial support on the way to help. There is also not much worse than seeing hours and hours of work be wiped out because the load of retardant got diverted, got delayed or just plain doesn't show up.

In 2024 an estimated 1.9 million acres have burned, breaking the state record previously set in 2020 the total number of acres surpassing the size of Rhode Island with the Durkee Fire in Baker County at one point being the largest active wildfire in the U.S.

“Extreme infernos” hit Gilliam, Grant, Jefferson, Umatilla, Wasco, and Wheeler counties the hardest, destroying 42 homes and 132 other structures. A majority of these fires are in the Coverage area of the Union County Airport and the USFS LA Grande Tanker Base.

The provisions of this bill will better enable Union County Airport to deliver fuel to wildland fire aerial resources.

I realize that there will be fiscal impact to this bill’s passage. I hope that you consider the fiscal impact to Oregonians, if the retardant is not available for want of fuel. Also, it is my hope that our wildland firefighters don’t ever have to experience not getting that load of retardant that they are counting on.

I would be happy to answer any questions that you might have.

**Paul M. Anderes**

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