



Crook County

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March 11, 2025

Dear Members of the Legislative Committee,

As a Crook County Commissioner, I am writing to express my unwavering support for House Bill 3349 and House Bill 3350. My background as a voluntary firefighter and EMT for over ten years with our local Fire and Rescue Department has given me firsthand experience of the critical role such associations play in managing and mitigating wildfires in rural areas of Oregon.

This past fire season brought unprecedented challenges to our region. The Durgan, Crazy Creek, Wiley Flat, and Rail Ridge fires burned more than 14,631.5 acres, significantly impacting both the environment and the economic stability and safety of our communities. Our dedicated volunteers and ranchers spent over 2,660.25 hours combating these fires, often being the first on the scene and sacrificing essential agricultural duties to protect our lands and livelihoods.

House Bill 3349 is instrumental in providing agencies like the State Forestry Department with the resources needed to effectively support rangeland protection associations. The creation of the Rangeland Protection Association Fund, as proposed in this bill, will ensure that our volunteers, often the first to offer an opportunity to control or extinguish a fire or save a life, have access to essential firefighting tools and resources. With the proper equipment, success is better achieved, and more extensive damage can be avoided.

Similarly, House Bill 3350 aims to allocate funds to enhance the capabilities of firefighting groups in rural areas, ensuring they are better equipped and ready to face future emergencies. This financial support is crucial not only for maintaining current operations but also for upgrading necessary equipment to meet evolving challenges.

Supporting these bills is not merely a matter of funding; it is about enhancing our ability to safeguard our communities and manage our natural resources effectively. The approval of these measures will demonstrate the state's commitment to supporting the rural areas that often serve as the first line of defense against wildfires.

I strongly urge you to pass House Bill 3349 and House Bill 3350. Their enactment will bolster our current efforts and help secure a safer and more resilient future for the rural communities across Oregon.

Thank you for considering this vital legislation.

Sincerely,

X 

Brian Barney
County Commissioner