



Oregon

John A. Kitzhaber, MD, Governor

Department of Forestry

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April 29, 2013



"STEWARDSHIP IN FORESTRY"

The Honorable Jackie Dingfelder, Chair
Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee
Room 407, State Capitol
Salem, OR 97310

RE: HB 3199A - Prohibits the release of sky lanterns, discharge of exploding targets or discharge of tracer ammunition during fire season on or within 1/8 mile of forestland.

Dear Chair Dingfelder and Members of the Committee:

The Oregon Department of Forestry appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill 3199A. The Bill prohibits the release of sky lanterns, the discharge of exploding targets and the discharge of tracer ammunition on or within 1/8 of a mile of forestland during a state declared fire season. The agency currently has authority to regulate these activities on a per district basis under public use restrictions. HB 3199A proposes these activities be included as "prohibitive acts" directly in statute, thus eliminating the process of each of the 12 protection districts individually identifying these activities as prohibited.

The Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) Fire Protection Program provides wildfire protection on about 16 million acres of private, county, state and federally owned forestland in Oregon. The Department's number one priority is to help assist in the prevention of human-caused fires. Working collectively with the Keep Oregon Green Association, it is our charge to educate forest users about the existing fire hazard and to provide risk reduction measures and take positive action to minimize the threat.

On average, 730 fires caused by people burn about 4,500 acres each year on lands protected by ODF. Statistically, people are responsible for about 72 percent of all fire starts and 21% of the acres burned. Lightning accounts for the other 28% and 79% respectively.

In reference to exploding targets and tracer, or incendiary ammunition, 35 fires have occurred since 2007. The most notable fire in this category, the 1500 Road Fire of 2007, burned 362 acres and amounted to nearly \$1.4 million in fire suppression costs. Even one less fire could make a significant difference in the lives, natural resources and communities we protect.

Sky lanterns are a relatively new activity in the United States that may pose a significant threat to the protection of forestland in Oregon. In addition to the proposed language in HB 3199A, sky lanterns are also regulated under Oregon Fire Code (OFC). OFC 308.6 defines sky lanterns as a firework and specifies that the use of open flame devices liable to start or cause fires shall not be used in or upon wildfire risk areas unless authorized by the fire code official. This would include portable open flame devices fueled by flammable or combustible gases or liquids (substances) used in such a manner where the flame can potentially come in contact with combustible materials.

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To close, the Department of Forestry again thanks the Committee for the opportunity to express its support for HB 3199A and stands ready to assist in any way to finalize the bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Tom Fields".

Tom Fields, Fire Prevention Coordinator
Fire Protection Division

c: Doug Decker, State Forester
Richard Whitman, Governor's Natural Resource Advisor
ODF Executive Team
Robert Young, Fire Prevention and Policy Manager