

Willamette Law Students in Support of HB 3199

A Bill to Reduce Fire Hazards in Oregon's Forests

For many Oregonians, wildfire season in the forest is an annual concern that effects the forest resources shared by all. All forests, including those on state and private lands, are effected. Since forests are being utilized by more people in more places, increasing the potential for human-caused wildfire in recent years, additional safeguards are needed to keep forest resources safe from needless fire dangers.

Commonsense Reduction in Fire Hazards

This bill seeks to define tracer ammunition, exploding targets, and sky lanterns and restrict their use on or near forestland during declared fire seasons within each Dept. of Forestry (ODF) fire protection district. The bill would also provide for a citation for violations and liability for any suppression costs and damages that occur from fire caused by these items. The restrictions would be enforced by ODF. The goals of this bill are:

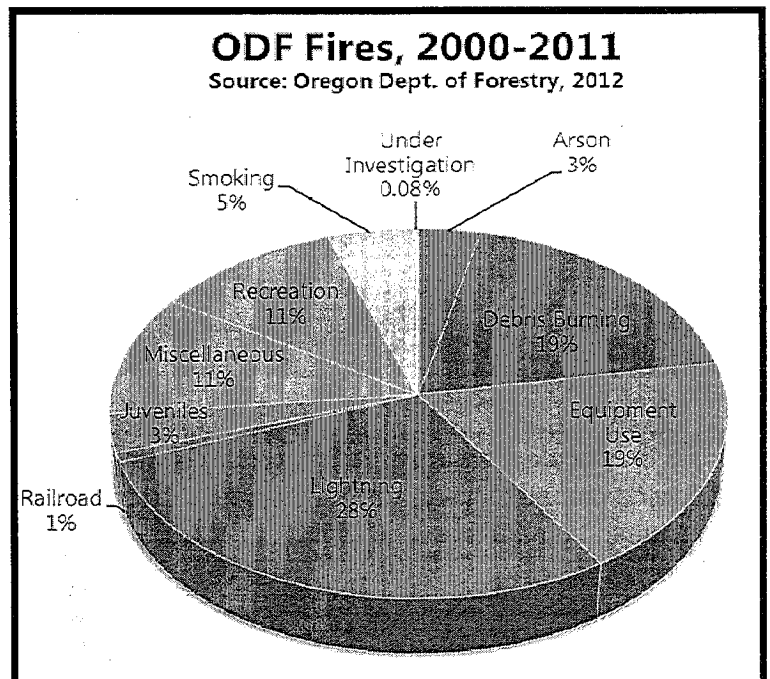
- ◇ **Reduce fire risk on State and Private lands** by reducing the number of hazardous activities allowed in forests during fire seasons, and inform the public of these risks when declaring fire seasons.
- ◇ **Provide uniform definitions** of the listed flammable items that can be applied in each ODF Fire Protection District.
- ◇ **Streamline enforcement efforts by ODF** already in place during fire seasons and reduce the overall cost of wildfires, including: suppression cost, resource loss, environmental damage, public and firefighter safety, and wildlife habitat

Tracers rounds, exploding targets, and sky lanterns are seeing increased use on or near forest lands. While these items can be used safely for much of the year, they, like any form of open flame, can be a major hazard when the conditions are ripe for fire. It should be common sense saying, "open flames just don't belong in a forest during fire season, let alone open flame that is uncontrollable when released."

During fire seasons, it is already against Oregon law to smoke a cigarette out in the forest. So why would we let recreational items like tracers, exploding targets, and sky lanterns be used in forests during the same season?

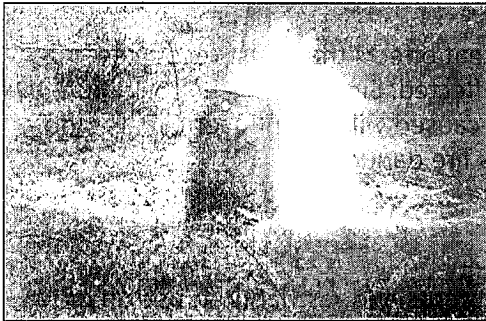
The Causes in Question

The graph to the right depicts the percentage of fire starts between 2000-2011 by the general cause of each reported fire. The items listed in this bill are considered part of the "Recreation" category which represents 11% of all fires reported during that period.



Tracer Ammunition

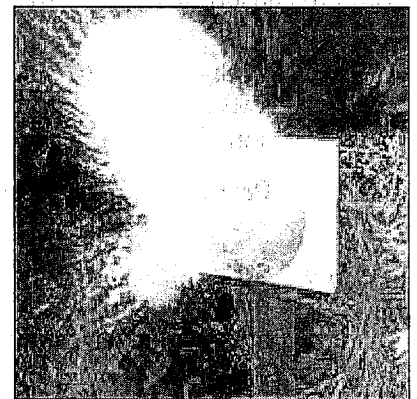
There is currently no definition for tracer ammunition in Oregon Law. Generally, tracers are most commonly used in the military and are bullets that contain a pyrotechnic charge that leave a visible fire trail show the bullet's path through the air. The pyrotechnic trail left by the tracer commonly starts fires in the right conditions.



- On one military base in Hawaii, it was found that **half of all wild-fires caused on the firing range were from the use of tracers.**
- In Oregon, tracer rounds have been involved in causing several forest fires since 2007, the largest of which was the 1500 Road Fire in September 2007, which **resulted in \$1.4 million in suppression costs alone.**

Exploding Targets

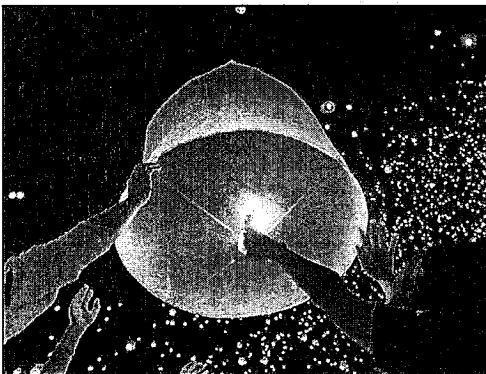
Similar to tracers, there is no current definition in Oregon Law. Exploding targets generally refer to any shooting target, either homemade or commercially made, that is designed to explode when hit by a bullet or projectile. While some types can be used without creating an open flame, many kinds of exploding targets do create a potential fire hazard.



- Since 2007, **ODF has had reported 35 fires from shooting related causes**, several of which include the use of exploding targets.
- In 2012, the "Goat Fire" in Washington State was one of several wildfires in the West to be caused by the use of exploding targets. The **Goat Fire burned around 7,400 acres between September and November.**

Sky Lanterns

Sky lanterns are currently listed in Oregon law as "balloons which require fire underneath to propel the same." However, this definition may be changed this year to no longer include a definition for sky lanterns, creating a need to define and manage this type of device near Oregon's forestland.



- Last year, used sky lanterns were discovered **amidst scorch marks in a harvested agricultural field near Canby.** Luckily there have been no fires reported yet from these devices in Oregon.
- **Four US states have full bans** on sky lanterns, and others, including Montana and Maryland, are considering similar restrictions this year.
- **Several countries in Europe and Southeast Asia have instituted full bans** in areas where sky lantern festivals have resulted in costly agricultural and forest fires.

This bill is a simple measure that strengthens existing law to help protect public and private forest resources by allowing more effective, uniform management of fire risks during the times of year where forests are most vulnerable to human-caused wildfire.

Willamette Law Students respectfully request support of HB 3199

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