



## Providing Opportunity to Family Forestland Owners

May 6, 2013

To: Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources

RE: HB 2050 Wildfire Protection Act

My name is Jim James. I am Executive Director of the Oregon Small Woodland Association (OSWA). OSWA is a membership trade organization that represents the interests of Oregon's family forest owners. We have chapters throughout the state, with about 1500 family memberships. OSWA members own and manage over 250,000 acres of Oregon's forests. OSWA supports HB 2050, the Wildfire protection Act. It will provide ODF with additional funding for the very critical initial attack on forest fires, provide equity between private forest owners and the general public to pay the deductible on Oregon's forest fire insurance policy, and provides equity to forest landowners in Eastern Oregon whose property taxes for fire protection have become unbalanced from no fault of their own. OSWA believes passage of HB 2050 is critical to help protect Oregon's private forests from fire. These private forests provide the backbone for Oregon's forest products industry and countless ecological values enjoyed by all Oregonians.

ODF has always been an important partner with Oregon's forest owners to protect private forests from losses due to fire. We know Oregon will have forest fires every year. HB 2050 will provide the tools necessary to keep fires small protecting valuable natural resources which will in turn reduce the overall cost of fighting fires.

OSWA urges the committee to support HB 2050, the Wildfire Protection Act. It will strengthen the partnership between ODF, forest owners and the general public to protect Oregon's forests from fire and decrease all the negative things associated with forest fires.

Thanks,

Jim James  
Executive Director  
Oregon Small Woodlands Association

Testimony  
2013 Oregon State Legislation Session  
House Agriculture and National Resource Committee  
Salem, Oregon 28 February 2013

John Breese, rancher, Prineville, Crook County, Oregon.

I support HB 2050: Wildfire Protection Act

Ours is a family ranch homesteaded in 1888. My wife and I are 4th generation ranchers. We plan to pass the ranch to a younger set of cousins eager to take on the challenge of ranching in the high desert. Our ranch includes forest and rangelands. Historically, when log prices rose or loggers needed a job, loggers or mills offered a check and took the best timber to the mills. When Uncle Jerry Breese was on the Board of Forestry in the early '70's, fire protection costs or the threat of large fire losses were not concerns in our family operation.

In '86 Lynne and I took over management for our part of the forest/ranch property. Timber assets were as valuable as the grazing. A sustainable forest makes money, is a potential value for the next generation, and makes environmental sense. Ours is an intensive on the ground work-in-progress. In 1996 we were awarded Eastern Oregon Region Non-Industrial Forest Lands Forest Stewardship from ODF & ODFW. In 2010 we were given the Outstanding Achievement Award for Stewardship by the Society for Range Management.

The "Eastside forest" can no longer pay its way. Local mills have closed, (5 in Prineville alone), log values have dropped, logging costs have increased, and logging infrastructure is collapsing. The increasing assessment is out-stripping the ability of the land to grow trees profitably. Currently, the patrol assessment on our ranch is over 90% of our property tax. Fire protection costs and large fire loss threats are major concerns in our operation.

HB 2050, a compromise that certainly takes a long time to fully implement, is a change for the better. This bill addresses patrol assessments and puts a check on costs while we as landowners are paying our fair share. For us, the real beauty of this bill is beefed-up district and unit capabilities. The department will be able call up heavy, mobile firefighting tools, "severity" capabilities, where needed as needed. This could save money and resource duplication. The department is focusing on prediction and detection for small fires and then having the ability to attack these fires before they grow large. The public is better served when private forests are adequately protected.

With the ability to stop east-side fires while small, the Department of Forestry could reduce statewide fire fighting costs. Our protection laws aim to have managed forests and logging for future generations as a public good. Oregonians want clean water, clean air, abundant wildlife and pleasing healthy forest landscapes. The public expects our forests to be protected for these social values. The public should step up to bridge the gap between our ability to pay and the costs of an adequate level of protection.

Thank you.

John Breese 541-447-6762

Testimony  
2013 Oregon State Legislation Session  
House Agriculture and National Resource Committee  
Salem, Oregon

February 28, 2013

Name: Lyle Defrees, 11956 Huckleberry Loop, Baker City, OR 97814

I support HB 2050 - "Wildfire Protection Act"

My family owns a cattle ranch in Baker County. The Defrees Ranch is a certified Oregon Century Ranch in Northeast Oregon in a valley called Sumpter. Over 1200 acres of the ranch are forested. I have actively managed the ranch including thinning of the forest to maintain and improve its health, to improve aesthetics, and provide public recreation, wildlife, and income. I am currently the President of the Baker County Private Woodlands Association, a Chapter of the Oregon Small Woodlands Association.

The fire cost control issue is one of having adequate resources so that costly catastrophic fires are minimized by a quick response. I believe if HB 2050 is implemented, the Department of Forestry would have less fire fighting cost statewide because of their ability to keep Eastern Oregon fires small.

The present Fire Patrol Assessment is a burden to the private woodland owners of Eastern Oregon who grow trees that grow at a slow rate. On one of my ranch's 2012/2013 county tax lots of 893 acres, the fire patrol assessment was \$1,555 or 94 percent of the property tax.

For a sustainable forest in Eastern Oregon, there must be an economic incentive to own the land. Several of my neighbors find their monetary returns are evaporating and they are selling the land for home sites or hunting areas. New landowners are often absentee owners who mistakenly believe unmanaged land is best for the environment and wildlife.

The public prefers forest that are aesthetically pleasing with healthy trees, clean water, abundant and varied wildlife, healthy forages, and clean air. If the public expects to benefit from the valuable resources that private lands provide, then the cost of protection from large fires should also be shared by all citizens.

HB 2050, I believe, will give the department the resources it needs to keep fire fighting cost down by reducing the size of the catastrophic fires in Eastern Oregon. It also addresses the fire patrol assessment while allowing the landowners to pay their fair share.

Your effort in holding this hearing at this time is greatly appreciated.