



# Oregon

John A. Kitzhaber, MD, Governor

MEASURE: HB 3109 A  
EXHIBIT: 2  
S RURAL COMM & ECON DEVELOPMENT  
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SUBMITTED BY: Nancy Hirsch

State Forester's Office  
2600 State Street  
Salem, OR 97310  
503-945-7200  
FAX 503-945-7212  
<http://www.odf.state.or.us>



May 14, 2013

Senator Roblan, Chair  
Senate Rural Communities and Economic Development  
Room 347, State Capitol  
Salem, Oregon 97310

**RE: HB 3109 A – Relating to forest wildfires impacts**

Dear Chair Roblan and members of the committee

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today on HB 3109.

Protecting forests from fire is our agency's number 1 priority. The Department protects 16 million acres – just over half of Oregon's forestland base. Together, these lands have a value of some \$60 billion. The lands include privately owned forests, as well as forests owned by the state and by local governments. Through a contract, we also protect the U.S. Bureau of Land Management's forests in western Oregon.

Key to meeting our Department's mission in protecting forests from wildfire is aggressive initial attack. This is all about suppressing fires before they grow large enough to inflict serious damage to natural resources, threaten public safety (public health), or run up millions of dollars in costs for landowners, the General Fund, or both. All of this is why we are very interested in this bill and why we urge your support of HB 3109 A.

The Department of Forestry had the opportunity to visit with Representative Whisnant in regards to this bill – specifically the desired outcome being sought. During our meeting with Representative Whisnant a number of amendments were discussed, and are now reflected in HB 3109 A.

The bill seeks to increase public awareness of the impact of wildfires – specifically the 2012 Pole Creek Fire. Increasing public awareness on the impact of wildfire is something our Department does on a regular basis through education and outreach with the public with an eye towards preventing wildfires. This report would enhance our communication to the public.

This report would be a joint report, where our agency would work jointly with the Director of the Oregon Health Authority in providing such report. Our Department would focus on the impacts

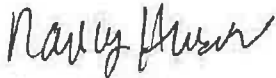
of wildfire on wildlife and aquatic habitat. Our Department, through coordination with other agencies (state and federal) could quantify information in regards to acres impacted and miles of stream – riparian areas impacted. Our Department could also provide information based on previous research like the specific impacts of wildfire on water quality/stream temperature.

Our Department appreciates the timing of this report to allow for coordinating and preparing this report in light of our focus right now being preparing for and already responding to the 2013 fire season.

Lastly, this report would be on the 2012 Pole Creek fire, just outside of the town of Sisters in central Oregon. While this was a United States Forest Service (USFS) fire, our Department was involved from day one (September 9) by the USFS's use of Department contracted air tankers during initial attack. Ultimately, this fire threatened ODF protected lands both to north and east which meant we were actively engaged for weeks coordinating with the Incident Management Team and engaging ODF resources to keep it off of the lands we protect. This fire grew to 26,795 acres before it was contained in mid October, with impacts from this fire directly impacting the community of Sisters for days.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I would be happy to address any questions you may have.

Sincerely,



Nancy Hirsch  
Fire Protection Division Chief

c: Doug Decker, State Forester  
Richard Whitman, Governor's Natural Resource Advisor  
Brett Brownscombe, Policy Advisor, Natural Resources  
ODF Executive Team  
Doug Grafe, Acting Deputy Chief, Fire Protection Division