

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

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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 Northeastern Oregon in a valley called Sumpter. Over 1200 acres of the ranch are forested. I have actively managed the ranch forest 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.

Controlling fire cost by having adequate resources for a quick response may minimize costly catastrophic fires. 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.

Lyle Defrees: 541-894-2241; defreesranch@eoni.com