

Testimony of Jim Pena 4/16/15
Oregon Joint Ways and Means Committee, Subcommittee on Natural Resources

Honorable Co-chairs Devlin, Rayfield and Committee members. Good morning and thank you for inviting me to testify before this committee. My name is Jim Pena and I am the Regional Forester for Region 6 of the US Forest Service. My responsibilities include National Forests in the States of Oregon and Washington and the delivery of State and Private Forestry programs through grants to the States. I am honored to be here to speak to the value and impact of the State's partnership involvement and investment with us, and update you on the progress made in increasing the pace and scale of federal forest management in Oregon.

Our partnership with the State of Oregon and ODF is creating a business model for federal-state cooperation that is recognized nationally and is attracting and leveraging additional federal investment. For example, mid-way through our funding cycle last year, we received an additional 2 million dollars for planning and restoration work in the Blue Mountains, in part due to the State's partnership. This funding was in addition to the substantial investment our agency was making in the Blues. This Region has continued the level of funding this year and our Washington Office is committing several million more for work in the Region.

State funds and expertise are helping us innovate and change how work gets done. State grants are also going directly to expand the capacity of citizen-based Collaborative Groups to achieve shared agreement among interest groups and communities. Oregon has a proud 20+ year tradition of supporting forest and watershed collaboration. Without these groups, and your help, we could not hope to tackle the restoration challenge by ourselves.

I'd like to take a little time to describe my perspective on the impact the \$2.88 million administered by ODF and the level and quality of engagement by State personnel is having on federal forest health and management:

The \$2.88 Million in State funds have helped expand the footprint of on-the-ground restoration work and jobs. A recent study by the Ecosystem Workforce Program (completed by the University of Oregon and Oregon State University) cited a 16% increase in jobs supported

by restoration in eastern Oregon. There is also a substantial increase in wood supplying local mills (up in 2013-14 by over 50% from 2009-2011 levels). We have used State resources in our partnership in the Blue Mountains to move projects forward more quickly into the contracting phase by surveying and posting boundaries between federal and non-federal lands. This has obvious benefits to both neighbors and is necessary to move a land management projects forward. State crews have also worked right along-side Forest Service crews preparing thinning projects and resulting timber sale contracts. This has gotten work done quicker and created synergy from our employees working together. It has worked so well, we want to build on this in the future by establishing a mobile, interagency crew with high level expertise in this work to prepare and administer more of these contracts.

The \$2.88 Million Administered by ODF is helping “seed” innovations, not just do business as usual. In the Forest Service we are also working to be more effective and efficient in the way we plan our land management work. This is important because planning is our highest cost center. In the Blue Mountains the Forest Service has a dedicated federal team developing the methods to dramatically increase the scale of environmental planning (up to 500,000 acres) in one-third to half the time. State funding has been strategically focused on leveraging innovative approaches to collecting and using data in the planning process. Together we have invested in the collection and use of LiDAR data to apply newer technologies that in turn help us focus the more costly collection of data in the field.

A year ago, other Forest Service teams developed and sold a large scale 10-year Stewardship Contract on the Malheur National Forest doubling the amount of wood going to mills, reducing forest fuels and helping ensure longer-term supply of wood and work in the woods. In the first year, the study I cited earlier has found that this contract has resulted in over \$2 Million in economic activity and supported 100 private sector jobs. On top of this, State agency personnel, representatives from the Governor’s Office, County officials and collaborative groups repeatedly hosted workshops and helped engage others in creative and meaningful ways. Having State personnel at the table, often leading discussions, is of utmost importance to me.

Part of the \$2.88 Million is growing capacity of collaborative groups that we closely work with and which are critical to our ability to increase the pace and scale of restoration. You all know the challenges of bringing diverse points of view together. The value of collaboration is much more than reducing litigation that can delay projects. They add jobs, social resilience, and enhance formal and adaptive learning in communities along with other intangible benefits. Through a grant process administered by OWEB the State of Oregon has provided significant funding to build the capacity of these broad citizen-based groups and coalitions. When I say “build capacity,” I mean that these groups are reaching agreement over larger National Forest landscapes and doing so by tackling more complex issues in less time. They are collecting inventory and monitoring data (often with students from local schools and Universities), working with the latest science, and conducting broader outreach within their communities to expand meaningful engagement and increase the transparency of our planning and decision-making. Without the broader agreement on complex issues, we cannot succeed in helping Forests and natural landscapes become more resilient to a changing climate. Oregon has some of the most mature natural lands Collaboratives in the Nation, and with about 23 of them sprinkled across the State, this is very good news for future generations.

Our commitment to eastern Oregon is and will remain strong into the future and I am committed to expand on innovations learned from different places and collaborative efforts across the State. We have made considerable progress to stand-up the accelerated restoration approach in the Blue Mountains. We are producing tangible outcomes and I am committed to maintaining momentum across the forests of Oregon and Washington. I acknowledge that there is much remaining to be done, and we will want to continue to be wise and strategic as we take advantage of future opportunities to increase the pace and scale in key places. One such opportunity I am particularly excited about using some of the new authorities in the 2014 Farm Bill, like the ‘Good Neighbor Authority’ to enhance partnership efforts with ODF and engage other State agencies.

I sincerely thank the State of Oregon and ODF for your partnership, leadership by example and for advancing a quality dialogue regarding the role of States in Federal land management. The professionalism of our employees working together in communities across the State honors them

and our partnership, and our citizens deserve nothing less. In Oregon we have some of the best models of local, State and Federal government working together. The State provides a critical link in that chain of relationships. When we work together, the citizens of Oregon and this Nation can be more meaningfully engaged with us. Our citizens expect us to work together, taking advantage of what each of us knows or does best, bringing clarity to complex issues and processes, and being more efficient, inclusive, adaptive and transparent.

Thank you, I welcome any questions you have for me.