



DATE: April 16, 2015

TO: Senator Richard Devlin, Co-Chair, Joint Ways & Means Committee
Representative Peter Buckley, Co-Chair, Joint Ways & Means Committee

FROM: Andrew Spreadborough, Central Oregon Intergovernmental Council

SUBJECT: Oregon Department of Forestry's Federal Forest Health Program

*Everywhere
Central Oregon
Works*

The Central Oregon Intergovernmental Council (COIC) strongly supports full funding of the Oregon Department of Forestry Federal Forest Health Program, at \$6.05 million in the 2015-2017 biennial budget. This investment is critical to ensuring public safety and the economic well-being of communities in Central Oregon, which are home to a variety of forest-dependent businesses.

By increasing the pace and scale of restoration of federal forests within Oregon, Policy Option Package 185 reduces the risk of catastrophic wildfire and its associated costs. In Central Oregon, our communities' economies and safety are integrally linked to the health of federal forests. Over 4 million visitors recreate in the Deschutes and Ochoco National Forests annually and communities such as Sisters, La Pine and Bend are nestled along forest boundaries.

Forest collaborative groups are an important tool for improving the health of our forests and our communities. Since their inception, forest collaborative groups have changed the tenor of public discourse regarding forest management, moving the dial from conflict to collaboration. The result is that diverse stakeholders are working together to promote ecologically sound forest restoration, local industries are benefiting from a supply of timber, wood products and biomass, and public safety is enhanced as a result of reduced risk of wildfire.

In order to remain effective, collaborative groups require investments that enhance their internal capacity for staffing and coordinating diverse stakeholders, communicating with Forest Service partners and undertaking outreach to a broader public. They have demonstrated that the investment required is worth the results. As an example, the \$2.885 million invested by the Legislature in 2013-2015 was leveraged over 3:1 by the U.S. Forest Service in priority treatment areas in eastern and southwest Oregon's "dry forests." We have an opportunity in the next biennium to build upon these successes and increase the pace and scale of restoration work in federal forests across the state while simultaneously benefiting our communities' economies and well-being.

As a long-time advocate and supporter of collaborative processes that engage diverse stakeholders in natural resource management and planning processes, COIC strongly supports this Policy Option Package 185.

Andrew Spreadborough
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