

March 23, 2017

TO: Senator Richard Devlin, Co-Chair, Joint Committee on Ways and Means
Representative Nancy Nathanson, Co-Chair, Joint Committee on Ways and Means

RE: Full funding for the Oregon Department of Forestry Federal Forest Restoration Program

I am writing to support ODF's Federal Forest Restoration package. In eastern Oregon, the timing, method and degree to which the US Forest Service offers timber sales, and other contracting opportunities, has significant impact for mills like ourselves, as well as local contractors and rural economies more broadly.

We recognize it is unique for a state to invest in what is traditionally thought of as the "federal government's job". Without question, we need additional federal funds to make significant headway to address forest health and supply raw material to our natural resource based economy. However, even at this difficult time for the state budget, we believe an investment of state funds to help increase the pace and scale of federal forest management is critical for rural Oregon and an important investment in our economy.

Collaboration can be long, complicated, and tiring work. As such, it has not been easy here in northeastern Oregon, though the benefits are easily outweighing the challenges. State funds have been vital to provide leadership, to facilitate local discussions and provide local input on forest management decisions made by the federal agency.

State funds have allowed us to keep momentum on local projects such as the Lower Joseph Creek Project, which are critical to future supply certainty for businesses like ours, as well as the health of our regional forests. Both Wallowa County and a local non-profit – Wallowa Resources – funded and contracted work to jumpstart this 100,000 acre project. State funds filled critical, timely gaps to complete data collection and keep the project on its timeline.

In the aftermath of the harsh 2015 fire season, ODF employees assisted with pre-sale layout on 4 fire-salvage timber sales on the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest (WWNF) and one more on the Umatilla National Forest (UNF). ODF crews also assisted on 9 other "green" timber sale units on the WWNF and UNF. The loss of available USFS personnel due to firefighting duties in that 2015 fire season would have completely disrupted a season of business for us and others in the industry if not for this assistance by ODF employees. The use of state funds to increase the pace of implementation on fire salvage sales is critical to recover timber value, support logging jobs, retain infrastructure, and maintain safe public access into our public lands.

Looking ahead, ODF could help increase the pace of implementation on the Lower Joseph Creek Project. Under the current USFS plan, the first timber sale would be offered in 2019. I would encourage the state to enter into a Good Neighbor Agreement with the USFS to reduce the timeline to achieve actual results on the ground. As I understand this tool, ODF would use staff to administer USFS timber sales and other forest restoration contracted work.

In northeastern Oregon, where wildfire and insect outbreaks readily cross over from federal land to private land, state investment is a proactive approach to reducing risk to private lands. Timber sales and other contracted work support local jobs in our natural resource based economy. Based on the urgent need both in our forests and our communities, we ask for your support of ODFs Federal Forest Restoration package.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Schmidt', written over a light blue horizontal line.

David Schmidt
President