

Southern Willamette Forest Collaborative
“Coming together for healthy forests and communities”

February 24, 2017

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

FROM: Southern Willamette Forest Collaborative

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

The Southern Willamette Forest Collaborative (SWFC) is writing to express our strong support for full funding of the Oregon Department of Forestry Federal Forest Restoration Program at \$4.4 million in the 2017-2019 biennium budget. This investment, as demonstrated in the last two biennium, is critical to increasing the pace, scale, and effectiveness of restoration of Oregon’s federal forests.

Forest collaborative groups bring environmentalists, timber industry representatives, local government, state and federal land management agencies, and community members together to find agreement on forest management. Collaboration has led to the development of new projects that meet multiple ecological and economic objectives, increasing the number and size of projects the agencies have been able to implement. The Federal Forest Restoration Program has also facilitated improved relationships between diverse stakeholders and agency partners through investments in collaborative capacity and technical assistance. Elements of the program, including Collaborative Support Grants, provide financial resources and expertise to collaboratives that would otherwise not be available to these community led groups. These resources are essential to support the activities of forest collaboratives and contribute to building strong social agreement for forest restoration.

In the 2015-2017 budget, the legislature invested \$5 million in this unique program and expanded it statewide. That investment paid off and has been leveraged more than 2:1 by the U.S. Forest Service in priority treatment areas across Oregon. As a result, a 16 percent increase in restoration-related jobs and a 14 percent increase in federal timber harvest have occurred across eastern Oregon since the program’s inception. In the next biennium we have the opportunity to build upon these successes by incorporating the program in the ODF base budget and developing and implementing the Good Neighbor Authority agreement that Governor Brown recently signed. The increased investment and use of new tools will support additional partnerships between state and federal land managers and enable greater returns and benefits to the State of Oregon and participating partners.

In 2016, the SWFC received Federal Forest Health Collaborative Technical Assistance for stewardship collaboration with the Middle Fork Ranger District of the Willamette National Forest. Over 30 people participated in the SWFC stewardship collaboration committee. The diverse group of stakeholders met for learning sessions, fieldtrips and roundtable discussions to recommend a local workforce area and two stewardship projects for a total of 550 acres. The projects combine thinning, stream restoration, road work and biomass removal. Together, the stewardship sales will keep at least \$350,000 on District to complete much needed restoration and provide local work. The grant has also helped the SWFC measure local workforce capacity and the effectiveness of the collaborative process.

Additionally, State Federal Implementation Partnership (SFIP) grants funded seven seasonal positions through the ODF to work with Willamette National Forest. The additional staff conducted fish and road surveys, stream mapping, timber sale prep and updated data that will make future planning more efficient. The District was able to accelerate 22.3 million board feet of timber sales and increase the annual timber target by 10 million board feet. SFIP grants also funded LiDAR data processing that will inform current landscape restoration planning and greatly increase the scale of restoration on the District.

We appreciate the Department of Forestry's implementation of the Federal Forest Restoration Program over the past two biennium and strongly encourage you to continue to support this groundbreaking effort. Full funding for the Federal Forest Restoration Program at \$4.4 million in the 2017-2019 biennium is integral to improving the health and resilience of our federal forest lands, creating and sustaining restoration and stewardship jobs in rural communities, protecting unique habitat for fish and wildlife, and restoring public lands for the benefit of all Oregonians.

On behalf of the SWFC board of directors and members, thank you for supporting this important program.

Respectfully,



Sarah Altemus-Pope
SWFC Coordinator
J.D., M.S. Conflict Resolution
541.521.5786
swfcollaborative@gmail.com
southwillamette.wixsite.com/swfc

SWFC Board of Directors

David Chamberlain	Greater Oakridge Area Trail Stewards
Jim Coey	Oakridge Mayor
Darren Cross	Middle Fork Ranger District (Advisory)
Sarah Dyrdaahl	Middle Fork Willamette Watershed Council
Loren Hogue	Community member
John Milandin	Oakridge Economic Development Advisory Committee
Kathy Nichols	Oakridge City Council
Susan Obermeyer	Community member
Laurie Patty	Oakridge business owner