

**Becki Lockett Heath, Deputy Regional Forester, Pacific Northwest Region, US Forest Service**  
**Testimony before**  
**Oregon Joint Ways & Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources**  
**April 5, 2017**

Good afternoon Co-chair Frederick, Co-chair Witt, and Committee members, for the record my name is Becki Heath, and I am the US Forest Service Pacific Northwest Deputy Regional Forester. I want to thank the Legislature, Governor's Office and State agencies for your interest and active participation in Federal Forest Management. Thank you for this opportunity to discuss how critical our work together is and commit to continuing these joint investments into the future.

In Oregon, the Forest Service has management responsibility for 16 million acres of national forests. We also deliver State and Private Forestry programs through direct grants to the state, which have totaled \$11.5 million over the 2015-17 biennium to support forest health, urban & community forestry, forest stewardship, and volunteer & state fire assistance.

In 2016, across Oregon's 11 national forests and the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area, we invested \$106 million in federal dollars for restoration activities. I'd like to run through some statistics that illustrate the results of Forest Service investment in rural communities across Oregon. In federal Fiscal Year 2016 in Oregon, the Forest Service:

- Offered 450 million board feet of timber for sale
- Treated 584,000 acres across all ownerships to reduce the risk of wildland fire, including 316,000 acres within Wildland-Urban Interface areas
- Treated 358,000 acres to restore or sustain watershed health
- Restored 199,000 acres of terrestrial wildlife habitat
- Restored 535 miles of stream habitat
- Removed 206,000 tons of green biomass material for direct use in energy production
- Hosted 8.6 million visitors to national forests
- Provided 15,200 miles of trails
- Reached 144,000 people through conservation education programming, including providing over 6,600 Oregon fourth graders meaningful outdoor activities through Every Kid in a Park programming
- Engaged 5,200 volunteers who contributed 460,000 hours, valued at \$10.8 million

- Leveraged agreements with 244 entities to attract \$25 million in external investment
- Worked directly with 26 separate Public Lands and All Lands Collaboratives

We often accomplish our work in partnership, whether with volunteers from local schools, technical experts from academia or the nonprofit sector, or ODF field crews. These collaborative relationships contribute to accomplishments beyond our own budget resources. Within this paradigm, the relationship between the Forest Service and the State of Oregon is unique in its strategic focus and consistently delivers outsized benefits. It has infused credibility into a new state-federal business model for collaborative natural resource management. It has resulted in millions of additional federal dollars being allocated for on-the-ground restoration activities in Oregon. And the Federal Forest Restoration Program in particular has driven innovation and positively impact on the pace, scale, and quality of restoration on Forest Service lands.

Earlier this year Governor Brown, State Forester Daugherty, and Forest Service Regional Forester Jim Peña participated in a Western Governor's Association National Forest and Rangeland Initiative workshop in Bend. The purpose of the Initiative is to create a mechanism for states and land managers to share best practices and policy options for forest and rangeland management. It is an honor to be viewed as a model worthy of potential replication by the 19 Western Governors.

Oregon's investment in federal forest management and the social infrastructure necessary for collaboration has paid significant dividends in additional federal funding coming to the state over the past several years. More and more, the Forest Service places incentives on collaborative, landscape scale, cross-boundary management through internal competitive funding processes. In this arena, the conditions and collaborative foundation supported by Oregon's investments have contributed to extraordinary performance.

- Oregon has three **Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Projects** (as many as any state in the country), which have contributed over \$24 million in CFLR Program appropriated funds, over \$46 million in additional Forest Service investments to support landscape restoration goals, and over \$8 million in additional partner matching funds since 2010.

- In the past three years, Oregon national forests have received over \$18 million of **supplemental Hazardous Fuels treatment funds**, allocated in part based on strong on-the-ground partnerships.
- Since 2014, five **Joint Chief's Landscape Restoration Projects** have been selected in Oregon (also as many as any state in the country), totaling over \$9 million in Forest Service investments from our national office, nearly \$7 million in NRCS investments into treatments on private land, and \$764,000 of grants from the Forest Service to ODF for work on private or state lands.
- Between 2012 and 2014, two separate **Cohesive Wildland Fire Strategy pilot projects** have been established in Northeast and Southwest Oregon through over \$1 million worth of grants from the Forest Service to ODF.
- Just since March 13, 2017, when Regional Forester Jim Peña spoke in Salem with the Senate Environment & Natural Resources committee, we've received an additional \$2.1 million to further support collaborative cross-boundary work in Oregon under the initiatives laid out above.

As you can see, Oregon's commitment to collaborative solutions on federal lands has a synergistic effect that attracts resources and spurs innovation in tangible ways. The state's investments have been strategically focused to directly address well-known bottlenecks within our restoration planning and implementation processes.

Support of collaborative groups is crucial to bringing the pace and scale of our restoration activities more in line with the needs of our forests. The Federal Forest Dashboard, a project of the Federal Forest Working Group, found **that since the State's investment in Federal Forest Restoration, 63% of acres with signed Forest Service NEPA decisions on the East Side have incorporated input from local collaborative groups**. These grass-roots, locally-led efforts are absolutely critical to help us hone the array of values desired by the public and reach broad social agreement. This involvement benefits the scale at which we are able to plan – since 2009 our average NEPA decision area with collaborative involvement is 24,000 acres, in contrast with 10,000 acres when we don't work with a local collaborative group but simply seek public comment. In turn, the investment in collaboration has resulted in a **45% increase in annual average of acres with signed NEPA decisions between 2012 and 2015 compared to 2009-2011**.

Regarding the pace of implementation on those decisions, the Forest Service has benefited from support of ODF seasonal employees in marking unit boundaries and tree marking on 50 Forest Service timber sales over the past two years. In total, these timber sales account for 256 million board feet of Forest Service timber offered for purchase and harvest. ODF crews worked side-by-side with Federal employees to accomplish these results.

Oregon's investment in field coordinators to work with Forest Service personnel and collaborative groups has established a strong foundation to utilize the Good Neighbor Authority, which was created in the 2014 Farm Bill. It has been my expectation that all of Oregon's national forests will explore Good Neighbor opportunities with their local state partners. We've been able to enter several project agreements with ODF and are developing potential projects with ODFW as well. We will continue to use Good Neighbor Authority to build on each other's strengths in pursuit of mutual goals, and State Forester Peter Daugherty's comments on the Paddock Butte project on the Fremont-Winema illustrate how we're trying to get the most out of the new authorities at our disposal.

As the state's investment in federal forest restoration has spread to the West Side over this current biennium, we're seeing the acquisition of site-specific field data result in significant progress in the quality of our restoration activities. Accurately mapping Marbled Murrelet occupied habitat, fish distribution, stream location, and road conditions allows us to design timber harvest and restoration projects that protect conservation values while also expanding the operating acreage and seasons for timber industry partners to accomplish the work that feeds local mills and sustains rural economies. We are always working to achieve efficiencies and increase restoration quality at the same time. ODF has contracted state funds to further test Forest Service specialist's ideas to reduce both time and costs of project-level planning.

As proud as we are of our partnership with the Oregon Department of Forestry, we all know significant challenges remain, and we are actively working together to prioritize investments, support rural communities, and do more together than we could alone to restore Oregon's precious forest resources. Thank you for the state's leadership in this area, and I welcome any questions you have for me.