



April 5, 2017

Oregon Conservation Network Testimony on HB 5519, ODF Budget

Senator Lew Frederick and Representative Brad Witt, Co-Chairs
Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources
Oregon State Capitol
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Co-Chairs Frederick, Witt, and Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 5519, the budget bill for the Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF).

The Oregon Conservation Network (OCN) is coordinated through the Oregon League of Conservation Voters. OCN is a coalition of nearly 40 not-for-profit organizations throughout the state, united to advocate for pro-conservation legislation and to fight policies that threaten our state's natural legacy. OCN is powered by tens of thousands of Oregonians who belong to their membership organizations. We work to protect funding for natural resource agencies and programs, as well as policy that will ensure a better Oregon for our children.

We strongly encourage your support and approval of HB 5519, the ODF's proposed 2017-2019 budget. As the Legislature and the Governor's Office consider reductions to ODF's budget, we encourage the consideration of ODF's value in the conservation and protection of Oregon's forests. In order to protect and preserve our state's valuable resources for future Oregonians, we must prioritize our natural resource agencies' budgets today.

In general, OCN supports the Federal Forest Restoration Program and believes that this investment by the state can play a powerful role in ensuring restoration on national forestlands is comprehensive. Specifically, we would like to commend the work of Chad Davis and other ODF regional staff that have been hired to oversee the implementation of these funds.

As ODF has pointed out, "current federal funding is focused on thinning treatments." Implementation of other important components of restoration - such as meadow enhancements, in-stream habitat creation, and prescribed fire - are not keeping pace and require further investment. Only by assisting with these activities can we complete the full cycle of restoration and bring resiliency back to forests that have been harmed by past excessive logging and overzealous fire suppression.

OCN also supports fully funding the Rangeland Protection Associations' coordinator position in order to protect sage grouse habitat and rangeland health. It's valuable to Oregon's economy to ensure rangeland continues to be a sustainable source of habitat and income for our ranching communities.



In conclusion, we ask that the Subcommittee support HB 5519 and approve ODF's proposed 2017-2019 budget. We believe ODF's work is of vital importance to our members and the invaluable services it provides for the future of all Oregonians.

Sincerely,

Paige Spence
Director, Oregon Conservation Network
Oregon League of Conservation Voters