

Testimony to Ways and Means Committee  
Oregon Department of Forestry Budget  
April 5, 2017

My name is Jim James. I am the Executive Director of Oregon Small Woodlands Association. Family forest owners own 42% of the Private Forests in Oregon. They rely heavily on the Department of Forestry to protect their forests from fire and to provide them with information about Oregon's Forest Practice Laws, so they can operate in compliance with the FPA. In return family forest owners through a harvest tax and property taxes pay for 50% of the Department's preparation for a normal fire season and shares with the general fund some of the costs associated with excessive fire costs. As you know, the cost of fighting fires is only a portion of the actual losses resulting from fires. Landowners also suffer the actual losses, on the ground, due to fire. There is no insurance to pay a landowner for their losses from a fire, only the cost to reestablish a healthy forest. The partnership between landowners and the department is the key to Oregon's success in keeping fires small and limiting costs and losses.

Landowners also help fund 40% of the Private Forest Division's costs through a harvest tax. OSWA supports keeping the ODF Fire and Private Forest budgets in tact without the cuts in the governor's budget. The full funding of these programs are important so ODF can meet its obligations to landowners and to the public, protect forests from fire, help keep Oregon's forests protected from insects, diseases, and invasive species, and make sure Oregon's forests operate in compliance with Oregon's Forest Practice Laws. The public is best served when ODF is fully funded.

Read list of cuts -

Eliminating these programs is not in the best interest of Oregon's citizens. The ecological benefits from Oregon's forests enjoyed by every Oregonian, will be put at risk if ODF is not fully funded to do its job, fight fire, and protect the resource. A job I believe they do quite well and will continue to do if adequately funded.

I also question the logic of funding for the forest service restoration programs while slashing programs in fire and private forestry. And question the permanent funding of this effort. There should be a point in time when the Forest Service should be able to stand on its own feet and actually pay the state of Oregon back for its investments in federal forests. OSWA does support the concepts in the federal forest restoration programs, but not at the expense of ODF's other important programs that actually get partially funded by landowner dollars. This is irrational.

I would like to remind the Committee of the commitments laid out in the 2013 Wildfire Protection Act. Forest landowners take an additional \$3,000,000 per year from the landowner's Emergency Fire Fund to enhance ODF's fire preparedness to address wildfires. In return, the general fund is to allocate \$1,000,000 to property tax relief for eastside landowners. The governor reneged on the Wildfire Protection Act by not allocating \$1,000,000 to the eastside relief in this year's budget. OSWA believes the rationale for the relief is just as real today as it was in 2013.

I would like to read the testimony of two OSWA members from Eastern Oregon, who could not travel to Salem today, but wish to testify.

## **Private Forests Reductions as per Governor's Budget – Talking Points 1.8.17**

### **5% Target for General Fund Reductions (out of 8% overall for ODF):**

#### **Eliminate all General Fund for the Watershed Research Cooperative (Trask Watershed Study)**

Oregon's forestlands supply abundant, clean water for Oregonians. Protecting, maintain and enhancing the health of Oregon's forests, soil and water resources is a key strategy in the 2011 Forestry Program for Oregon, the BOF's overarching policy document. Eliminating funding for this and other research, limits ODF's role in meeting the statutory requirement to conduct research and monitoring to verify that current forest management practices are indeed protective and develop new rules, or policies where needed to maintain water quality.

#### **Reduce General Fund and Harvest Tax for the FPA Compliance Audit – Limits compliance audit to one per biennium**

Reducing the annual FPA compliance audit to every other year, limits ODF's ability to determine the appropriateness, effectiveness and adequacy of current Forest Practice Act rules and also limits ability to determine rates of compliance for private forestlands from which timber was harvested.

#### **Eliminate General Fund for ODF Biomass Program**

Effective woody biomass markets benefit all Oregonians through rural economic development, improved, forest health, reduced fire risk and cost and provide home grown low-carbon energy. Oregon has already invested in biomass project development, construction and operations. Eliminating the Biomass Coordinator position compromises ODF's ability to participate in new successful partnership to integrate biomass use with deferral forest restoration projects as well as developing biomass outlets to offer private landowner new revenue streams which are need to keep forest healthy and productive. Eliminating General Fund leaves a gap in "match" for federal funding that is received for the biomass program.

#### **Reduce General Fund for the Oregon Plan for Salmon and Watersheds – impacts to Salem and staff and field positions.**

This reduction will significantly reduce activities associated with the Oregon Plan for Salmon and Watersheds, and the agency's ability to participate in recovery planning for salmon and other aquatic species. Impacts include reduced ability of landowners to achieve forest management objectives, meet Oregon Plan goals, and contribute to production of public values of Oregon's forests (water, wildlife, timber, open spaces).

### **Eliminate general fund portion of Sudden Oak Death treatments and staffing**

Reducing funding in the Forest Health program affects the ability to control the spread of Sudden Oak Death and implement the “Living with the Disease” strategy. The ability to provide technical assistance and treatment funding to landowners and monitoring of SOD will be severely limited to what can be accomplished with federal grant funding. Reducing the General Fund will compound the difficulty to provide SOD services with federal funds that required a General Fund “match”.

### **Eliminate general funds for the Invasive Species program**

Nonnative plants, animals and diseases increasingly threaten forests. They degrade habitats, displace desirable species, kill trees and native plant and cost Oregonians millions of dollars. Established and new invasive threats will continue. Eliminating general funds for the invasive species coordinator will limit ODF’s ability to cooperate with other regulatory agencies, research institutions and the USFS and provide coordinated efforts to managing invasive species threats such as the recent Asian Gypsy Moth Project that took place in Portland in 2016. Reducing the General Fund will compound the difficulty to provide other fund “match” to federally funded grant projects.

### **Eliminate Forest Practices monitoring positions**

Elimination of positions in the monitoring program restricts ODF’s ability to follow its statutory requirement to conduct research and monitoring to verify that current forest management practices are indeed protective and develop new rules or policies where needed to maintain water quality, including drinking water and fish habitat. Further expansion of the FPA compliance audit is hampered by reduction in capacity. The BOF work plan will have to be adjusted and efforts to review riparian policy in Eastern Oregon and Siskiyou would be limited.

### **Eliminate general fund and harvest tax funding from 9 stewardship foresters across the state.**

This significantly reduces the Department’s ability to administer the Forest Practices Act (FPA), risking the credibility of the Act for protecting resources and public safety. This reduction would lead to increased resource damage, fewer public benefits from forests, and reduced ability to provide technical assistance to family forestland and industrial-investment forestland owners. Additionally, this reduction has significant impacts in the fire program; stewardship foresters play a vital role in the fire management organization. This reduction will reduce firefighting field capacity at both the district and statewide level. Loss of these positions will affect firefighter safety and fire costs.

### **Eliminate Forest Practices Field Support Coordinator position**

The Private Forests program protects Oregon's natural resources by educating landowner about and enforcing the FPA. This position provides interpretation and guidance to stewardship foresters as they administer the FPA around the state. Loss of the position limits the ability to provide orientation and training of the FPA to the field stewardship foresters.

### **Reduce General Fund to Family Forestlands incentives coordinator position**

Oregon's 4.7 million acres of family forestlands provide key functions for rural landscapes, and economies. Delivery and development of incentive programs to encourage management and retention of family forestlands has been limited to reduced federal funding support. Reducing funding in this position limits the ability to developing and delivering incentive programs; implementing the Oregon Plan and administering the FPA for family forestland owners. Reducing the General Fund will compound the difficulty to provide other fund "match" to federally funded grant projects that benefit family forestland owners.