



April 4, 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: Sustainable Northwest
SUBJECT: Full funding for Oregon Department of Forestry Federal Forest Restoration Program

Dear Co-Chairs Devlin and Nathanson:

Sustainable Northwest 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 quality of restoration of Oregon's federal forests.

More than 60% of Oregon's forests are managed by the U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management. These forests provide diverse economic opportunities, clean air and drinking water, critical wildlife habitat, and recreational experiences. However, at least 2.5 million acres of federal forestland in eastern and southwestern Oregon alone requires active restoration in order to restore forest health. Changes in forest management over recent decades has also resulted in the loss of much of the state's forest products infrastructure and associated jobs. The Federal Forest Restoration Program works to support the development of a sustainable forest products infrastructure that provides living wage jobs in restoration and stewardship of federal forests through collaboration, innovative partnerships, and integration of science into planning and management. The program seeks to enhance fish and wildlife habitat, reduce risk of uncharacteristic wildfire, and produce timber supply for mills and forest products companies.

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. Select trends and accomplishments from the program since its inception and in the past biennium include:

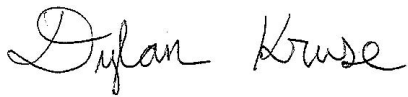
- A 16% increase in restoration-related jobs and a 14% increase in federal timber harvest have occurred across eastern Oregon since the program's inception.
- In the past two years, ODF seasonal employees assisted with marking unit boundaries and tree marking on 54 federal timber sales on eight National Forests and one BLM District. This partnership resulted in pre-sale layout on 275 million board feet (MMBF) of timber statewide, including an increase in the annual timber target by 10 MMBF on the Willamette National Forest.
- 63% of acres with signed Forest Service NEPA decisions on the East side have incorporated input from local collaborative groups.
- Since 2009 the average NEPA decision area with collaborative involvement on the East side is 24,000 acres, and just 10,000 acres without collaborative involvement.
- On the East side, collaboration has contributed to a 45% increase in annual average of acres with signed NEPA decisions between 2012 and 2015 compared to 2009-2011.

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. Consistent with the program's structure and intent, these investments will incorporate input from diverse stakeholders, and are carefully monitored both within the agency, as well as through third-party monitoring currently conducted by the Ecosystem Workforce Program at the University of Oregon. This focus on transparency and accountability ensures maximum return on investments, opportunities for adaptive management, and a clear articulation of environmental, economic, and social outcomes.

We appreciate the Department of Forestry's implementation of the Federal Forest Restoration Program over the past two biennia 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.

Thank you for supporting this important program.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Dylan Kruse". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the word "Respectfully,".

Dylan Kruse
Policy Director
Sustainable Northwest