



April 4, 2017

Trout Unlimited testimony on 2017-19 Oregon Department of Forestry budget

Co-Chairs Frederick and Witt, Committee members,

My name is Tom Wolf, here representing Trout Unlimited, the nation's largest cold water conservation group. Our members are dedicated to protecting and restoring riparian habitat through stream restoration projects. Therefore, protecting the Oregon Department of Forestry budget is so important to Trout Unlimited—for funding the responsibility ODF has towards conservation of important forest and riparian areas that provide protection for wild fish and insure healthy watersheds.

Trout Unlimited wants to make sure that ODF gets everything they asked for in their 2017-19 budget, SB 5519. It is important that they have funding for staff and programs which will impact conservation of riparian areas in both private and state forests. The current operation of ODF is important in this time when Oregon natural resource agency budgets are getting slashed by 15%. TU just wants to make sure that state forests and private forest conservation programs don't get overwhelmed by firefighting programs. Of course, it is important to have sufficient funds to fight fires, especially in this era of climate change that is producing dry fire prone forests. But protecting key riparian habitat within our forests for streams that provide drinking water and wild salmon/trout for both food and economic sustenance for our local rural communities.

And if I might add a concern that Trout Unlimited has for the future budgets of Oregon Department of Forestry. For example, an ODF POP for providing funding for recreational uses of Oregon state forest was dropped from the ODF 2017-19 budget early in the process. Currently the 800,000 acres of state forest in Oregon—with 500,000 in Clatsop/Tillamook state forest only a short drive from Hillsboro/Beaverton/Unincorporated Washington County with close to 1,000,000 people living there and looking for recreational opportunities such as hiking, camping, biking, fishing, etc. ODF needs to have funding to further develop campgrounds, trails, etc. in these key state forests. Important trails and campgrounds, such as the Salmonberry trail, will need funding in the future so our state forest will be enjoyed by Oregonians and the rural communities surrounding them can get economic benefits from this recreational use.

So, in conclusion, Trout Unlimited urges this committee to approve the ODF 2017-19 proposed budget, SB 5519. This is important for many watersheds in Oregon.

