



ODF Budget Testimony (HB 5019)

Joint Ways and Means Natural Resources Subcommittee

February 27, 2019

Co-Chairs Taylor and Reardon and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on the budget for the Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF). The Oregon Farm Bureau and Oregon Cattlemen's Association represent thousands of farmers and ranchers in the state, including small woodland owners and ranchers who rely on ODF programs.

As in initial matter, we are writing to support the ask of the SageCon sage grouse conservation partnership, of which OFB is part, for an additional \$450,000 to support Oregon's rangeland fire protection associations (RFPAs). The additional funding for RFPAs would go towards firefighter training and equipment, such as personal protection equipment and radios. Volunteers, who are largely rural farmers and ranchers, organized by local RFPAs, provide the first line of defense against wildfires in many rural areas. Fires and the weeds that invade rangelands after a fire, are the two biggest threats to sage grouse and rangeland health. Improved equipment, training and coordination with BLM have dramatically improved initial responses to fires in recent years, and RFPAs are to thank for these improvements. Please support this additional funding for these critical programs.

Additionally, we urge you to oppose an almost \$2 million cost shift to landowners for administration of the Forest Practices Act. Through the Forest Products Harvest Tax, Oregon landowners pay 40% of the administration of the Forest Practices Act. The GRB increases that percentage to 50%. We oppose shifting a greater percentage of compliance costs to the regulated community, and are concerned that the shift could create concerns about the program being funded and driven by industry.

We also support Package #110, continuation of funding for Fire Severity Resources and Insurance Costs, and the proposed administrative budget increase around Fire Cost Reimbursement Process Improvements, as the current system is wildly underfunded.

Thank you for your consideration.

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