

February 27, 2019

**TO:** Senator Kathleen Taylor, Co-Chair, Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources

Representative Jeff Reardon, Co-Chair, Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources

**FROM:** Southern Oregon Forest Restoration Collaborative

**SUBJECT:** Support for Oregon Department of Forestry Federal Forest Restoration Program

The Southern Oregon Forest Restoration Collaborative is writing to express our strong support for full funding of the Oregon Department of Forestry Federal Forest Restoration Program (FFRP) in the 2019-2021 biennium budget. This investment, as demonstrated in the last three biennium, is critical to increasing the pace, scale, and quality of restoration of Oregon's federal forests. FFRP provides financial and technical support to local forest collaborative groups, issues contracts to increase the pace of project approval, and develops and implements Good Neighbor Authority projects. This comprehensive suite of integrated resources accomplishes diverse project outcomes and deliverables that could not be achieved in isolation.

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, recent research has suggested that at as much as 4.5 million acres of federal forest lands in Oregon are in need of active management to achieve resilient landscapes. 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. Furthermore, Oregon, like many other western states, has experienced a significant increase in the severity and duration of large wildfires. The past decade of fire seasons that start earlier, end later, and burn significantly more acres has taxed the state's fire suppression capacity and proved that more must be done to proactively address the risk posed by unhealthy, departed conditions on fire prone forests.

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. Oregon pioneered the model of forest collaboration that has expanded across the West and we take pride in moving beyond an "us versus them" mentality towards a "triple bottom line" solutions-oriented approach.

In the 2017-2019 budget, the legislature invested \$3 million in this unique program and incorporated it permanently in the Oregon Department of Forestry budget as a signal of long-term commitment to its demonstrated value and additional potential. That investment has paid off, as the program has been leveraged more than 2:1 by the U.S. Forest Service in priority treatment areas across Oregon. In addition to collaborative project development and planning acceleration, the program has now fully enabled and begun implementation of the Good Neighbor Authority agreement that Governor Brown signed in 2016. Good Neighbor Authority successes in the past biennium include:

- ODF has agreements in place for GNA project work on 10 of the 11 National Forests in Oregon.
- \$5.1 million of project work, including fuels reduction treatments, aquatic habitat improvement, and timber sales forecast to generate revenue of \$2 million.
- ODF is on track to offer eight timber sales by June 2019, totaling 15.7 million board feet.

Coupled with support for the state's network of federal forest collaboratives, 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.

We appreciate the Department of Forestry's implementation of the Federal Forest Restoration Program and strongly encourage the legislature to continue and expand upon this groundbreaking effort. Full funding for the Federal Forest Restoration Program in the 2019-2021 biennium is integral to improving the health and resilience of our state's forest lands, reducing wildfire risk and threats to human health and safety, 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.

The Oregon Department of Forestry is a key component in the lives and livelihoods of many workers and residents of SW Oregon. Supporting this important program in the Oregon Department of Forestry budget helps further strengthen the critical role ODF plays in our region.

Respectfully,

George McKinley  
Executive Director  
Southern Oregon Forest Restoration Collaborative