



Oregon

Kate Brown, Governor

Department of Forestry

State Forester's Office

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Senator Kathleen Taylor, Co-Chair
Representative Jeff Reardon, Co-Chair
Joint Interim Committee on Ways and Means
Subcommittee on Natural Resources
900 Court Street NE, H-178
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Response to committee member questions

Dear Co-Chairs:

During November Legislative Days, the department committed to following up on questions committee members had related to fire statistics and wildfire costs.

Fires and acres burned, ODF-protected lands vs. federal lands

ODF has protection responsibility for more than 16 million acres of private and public lands (state, local, and some federal government); however, 60% of forested lands in Oregon are federal and the vast majority of those are protected by federal agencies (USFS, BLM, USFW, etc.).

Protection Responsibility	Number of Fires	Acres Burned
ODF	1,135	226,305
Federal	830	591,477
Total	1,965	817,782

While fires on ODF-protected lands accounted for approximately 58% of fires across all jurisdictions in Oregon in 2021, those fires only accounted for approximately 28% of the total acres burned. The numbers for 2021 were much higher than the average proportion of fires and acres burned on ODF-protected lands. Between 2010 and 2019, the average annual number of fires across all jurisdictions in Oregon was 2,149 with 557,541 acres burned. Of those, the average for ODF-protected lands was 952 fires (44% of statewide total) and 41,738 acres burned (just 7.5% of the statewide total), with the remainder attributable to federal, tribal, and unprotected lands.

Fire costs

There has been statewide use of "large fire" costs rather than "emergency fire," which is the phrasing used in Oregon Administrative Rule. ODF acknowledges that referring to "large fire" costs is both confusing and inaccurate. When it comes to wildfires, there is a broad understanding that a "large

fire” (for data a tracking purposes) is one that exceeds 100 acres of timber or 300 acres of grazing land. Additionally, the costs included in “large fire costs” are not limited to “large” fires, but any fires that meet the criteria provided in Oregon Administrative Rule 629-165-0000. In an attempt to make it more understandable, the department will begin using “emergency fire,” in accordance with Oregon Administrative Rule.

Regardless of verbiage, the definition of both terms is the same. Under Oregon Administrative Rule 629-165-0000 (4), an “emergency fire” is one that *“due to the specific circumstances of the fire, requires more suppression resources to control and extinguish than the district can reasonably provide within the approved district budget...”*

Under OAR 629-165-0000(5), “emergency fire suppression costs” are *“those fire suppression costs attributable to an emergency fire that exceed:*

- a. The costs of the fire suppression response provided by the approved district budget as further described in OAR 629-165-0005; and*
- b. An addition per fire or per day cost of suppression further defined in OAR 629-165-0010.”*

Gross emergency fire costs include all emergency fire costs paid by ODF, not including severity or budgeted costs. Net costs are those remaining after factoring in reimbursable amounts (state and federal partners, insurance policy, and Oregon Forestland Protection Fund). The net costs represent the state’s share of emergency fire costs and are covered by General Funds under Oregon’s current fire funding structure.

Additionally, there are two Legislative Fiscal Office briefing papers that provide a great deal of information about wildfire protection funding in Oregon that committee members may find valuable: [Forestry Protection from Fire Funding](#) (September 2020) and [How Oregon Funds Forest Wildfire Protection](#) (March 2016).

I hope this information is helpful to the committee. Please don’t hesitate to reach out to me if you have any additional questions we can assist with.

Sincerely,



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- c: Jason Miner, Governor's Office
Oregon Board of Forestry
Matt Stayner, Legislative Fiscal Office
Renee Klein, Chief Financial Office