

ANALYSIS

Item 38: Department of Forestry 2022 Fire Season

Analyst: Matt Stayner

Request: The Oregon Department of Forestry requests:

- 1) Acknowledgement of the receipt of a report on the 2022 fire season, including a preliminary report of losses on private lands of timber, buildings, fencing, livestock, and grazing land capacity if the land is expected to be unavailable for two or more grazing seasons as required by House Bill 2501.
- 2) Allocation of \$5,988,093 from the Special Purpose Appropriation appropriated to the Emergency Board for the state's portion of 2022 fire season severity resources costs.
- 3) A General Fund allocation of \$8,788,683 million for the state's portion of net large-fire costs for the 2022 fire season.
- 4) An increase in the Other Funds expenditure limitation of \$33,504,119 to enable processing of payments and operations from the 2022 fire season including anticipated fire cost recoveries (U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management), anticipated cost recoveries (Federal Emergency Management Agency), and state large-fire costs funded from the Oregon Forest Land Protection Fund.

Analysis:

Review of the Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) Fire Protection Program

Forest fire protection in Oregon is provided in three layers. The first of these is known as the base layer of protection and is achieved by a coordinated network of twelve fire protection districts including three independent fire protection associations. These local ODF districts are the first line of defense in fire detection and suppression. Local fire protection districts and associations provide personnel, equipment, and expertise to large-fire operations throughout the state. This base level of protection is included, with some exceptions, in the biennial budget for ODF and is in addition to the large-fire costs typically contained in the fire season reports.

The second layer of protection is the statewide large fire or emergency fire program, of which the majority of costs are unbudgeted. Large fire resources are coordinated on a statewide basis and pull personnel and equipment from throughout the agency, local protection districts, and from contractors to augment the effort of the local fire district in which a large fire is located. The cost of these resources is reflected in the large fire funding requests made by the agency in this report.

Severity resources are the third layer of the fire protection program. These resources, primarily aviation support, augment the base layer and are used to prevent or contain the spread of fires at the initial attack or to aid in the containment of large fires. The 2021 Legislature provided a \$14 million General Fund special purpose appropriation to the Emergency Board for severity resources. These funds are coupled with up to \$6 million from landowner acreage assessments, minimum lot assessments, improved lot surcharges, and harvest taxes to provide aviation resources, equipment pre-positioning, and airborne hand crews. When these resources are used on large fires, the cost of those activities are charged to and made part of the large fire costs. The remaining residual costs stand in addition to the large fire costs and base protection costs.

Report on the 2022 Fire Season and Associated Costs

The Oregon Department of Forestry's report on the 2022 fire season notes that the pre-season fire outlook was for an elevated fire activity, however, fire activity between April and July 2022 was far below average. While there were significant fires on federally protected lands, statistics provided in the report indicated that season was 17% below the ten-year average for the number of fires, 71% below the ten-year average for the number of acres burned, and 18% below the ten-year average for the number of human-caused fires on ODF protected lands. ODF attributes these reductions, in part, to the enhanced preparedness efforts and initial attack investments.

Gross fire costs for the 2022 season are reported at just over \$35 million. After subtracting anticipated Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) grants of \$80,783, anticipated federal agency cost reimbursements of \$16.2 million, and local fire district cost-shares of \$1.5 million, net emergency fire costs to the state are \$17.3 million.

Gross Fire Costs	Total Funds
2022 Fire Season Large Fire Costs	
FY 2022	\$297,955
FY 2023	\$34,728,304
Total 2022 Fire Season Large Fire Costs	\$35,026,259
District Deductibles	
2022 Season District Deductibles	
FY 2022	\$13,667
FY 2023	\$1,463,766
Total 2022 Season District Deductibles	\$1,477,433
Fire Cost Recoveries and Reimbursements	
2022 Season Fire Cost Recoveries (USFS and BLM)	
FY 2022	\$0
FY 2023	\$16,174,965
Total 2022 Fire Season Cost Recoveries	\$16,174,965
2022 FEMA large fire reimbursements (Anticipated)	
FY 2022	\$0
FY 2023	\$80,783
Total 2022 FEMA large fire reimbursements	\$80,783
Total Fire Cost Recoveries and Reimbursements	\$16,255,748
Net Fire Costs	
2022 Fire Season	
FY 2022	\$284,288
FY 2023	\$17,008,790
Total 2022 Fire Season	\$17,293,078

The state secured an insurance contract against the net cost of large fires in excess of \$50 million for the

2021 fire season. However, due to the nearly \$19 million claim against that 2021 insurance contract, the underwriting syndicate was not able to provide a policy with a \$50 million retention (deductible) for the 2022 fire season, opting instead to offer \$25 million of coverage for costs above \$75 million. With the substantial increase in the retention amount, the annual premium paid by ODF for the policy was \$4,066,425. Just slightly lower than the 2021 fire season premium of \$4,131,871. Of this amount, \$3,751,425 was paid by the General Fund and \$315,000 was paid via the Oregon Forest Land Protection Fund.

The net fire costs for the 2022 fire season of \$17.3 million fall far below the \$75 million retention for the 2022 fire insurance policy. No claims were made against the policy and no 2022 net fire costs are anticipated to be reimbursed from insurance proceeds.

Funding Requests

Severity Resources:

As discussed above in the section reviewing the ODF fire protection program, the severity resources program provides an additional layer of emergency fire response. Each fire season, ODF contracts with various providers for aviation and ground-based resources to supplement base-level fire protection activities that help to contain and prevent small fires from becoming large, costly fires. These resources are also used on large fires, but when utilized on a large fire, the cost of the resource is billed to and accounted for in the large fire cost. The funding provided in the special purpose appropriation also allows for the pre-positioning of these resources. A portion of the pre-positioning costs attributable to FEMA eligible large fires is anticipated to be approved for reimbursement by FEMA for the current fire season.

The Legislature provided a \$14 million General Fund special purpose appropriation to the Emergency Board for severity resources (\$7 million per year for the 2021 and 2022 fire seasons). This was a significant departure from previous years where the General Fund had been appropriated at \$2 million annually in accord with the statutory funding limitations of the landowner support for these activities through the Oregon Forest Land Protection Fund (OFLPF). The limit caps the expenditures from the fund for severity resources to the lesser of \$3 million or 3/5ths of the total expended on severity resources in each fire season from all funds.

Accounting for those amounts attributable to large fires and FEMA pre-positioning reimbursement, results in a residual amount of General Fund and Other Funds liability for severity resources obligations as shown in the following table:

<u>Total Severity Resources - 2022 Fire Season</u>	<u>General Fund</u>	<u>Other Funds</u>	<u>Total Funds</u>
<u>2022 Fire Season Severity Resource Obligations</u>			
Full Liability for Severity Resources Contracts	\$5,876,787	\$8,815,180	\$14,691,967
Less Amounts Billable to Incidents (large fire and other agency)	(\$1,921,987)	(\$2,882,980)	(\$4,804,967)
General Severity Resources Obligation	\$3,954,800	\$5,932,200	\$9,887,000
Less Potential FEMA Reimbursements (pre-positioning)	(\$359,563)	(\$539,344)	(\$898,907)
Unrestrained obligation based on 40/60 formula	\$3,595,237	\$5,392,856	
Net 2022 Fire Season Severity Obligation	\$5,988,093	\$3,000,000	\$8,988,093

ODF contracted for severity resources totaling \$14.7 million for the 2022 fire season. Of this amount, \$4.8 million was assignable to large fires and ODF has estimated FEMA reimbursements for pre-

positioning of resources to be \$898,907, leaving a net obligation of \$8,988,093. With the statutory limit of \$3 million from the OFLPF for severity resource funding, \$5,988,093 is allocated to the General Fund.

General Fund portion of large fire costs:

Due to the unknown frequency and severity of large forest fires in Oregon, no dedicated resources are provided to ODF for the purpose of paying large fire costs in the agency’s biennial budget. As discussed above, a base-level of funding is included to ensure that the agency maintains an adequate level of fire protection and preparedness through a distributed, coordinated system of fire districts, fire protection associations, and the fire protection division headquarters. If a fire exceeds the resources required at the local level of prevention, the cost of the fire may qualify for emergency fire cost funding. Those costs are managed at the agency level by the Emergency Fire Cost Committee and allocated to various funding resources including the OFLPF, the General Fund, federal sources, and Oregon’s unique forest fire insurance policy.

The difference between total fire season costs and the net costs are due to deductions in the total costs for those amounts that are billed to federal landowners or other entities for firefighting activities performed by ODF that are not on ODF-protected lands, anticipated cost reimbursements from FEMA for a portion of the firefighting costs when there is significant danger of structures or homes being damaged, and for district deductibles, which are portion of the initial costs that remain the responsibility of the fire protection districts and are funded at the base protection level. The following table shows the distribution of the \$17.3 million in net large fire costs by funding source.

<u>2022 Large Fire Funding Allocations</u>	<u>General Fund</u>	<u>Other Funds</u>	<u>Total Funds</u>
<u>OFLPF Funding</u>			
2022 Fire Season	\$0	\$8,504,395	\$8,504,395
<u>General Fund</u>			
2022 Fire Season	\$8,788,683	\$0	\$8,788,683
<u>Insurance Policy</u>			
2022 Fire Season	\$0	\$0	\$0
<u>Large Fire Costs in Excess of Insurance</u>			
2022 Fire Season	\$0	\$0	\$0
<u>Total Large Fire Funding Allocations</u>			
2022 Fire Season	\$8,788,683	\$8,504,395	\$17,293,078

Net fire costs are split 50/50 between the General Fund and the OFLPF up to the first \$20 million in any given fiscal year, with the General Fund paying 100% of the next \$55 million, and insurance covering the following \$25 million. Due to the lower than average number, and cost of fires during the 2022 season, no claim was made against the insurance policy. The imbalance between net costs allocated to the OFLPF and the General fund of \$284,288 is due to early-season net fire costs that occurred prior to the end of the 2022 fiscal year where the annual expenditure cap on the OFLPF had already been met due to the costs of the 2021 fire season allocated in the 2022 fiscal year.

Other Funds expenditure limitation:

Other Funds expenditure authority is required by ODF to expend monies for costs in addition to, or in conjunction with, the General Fund requests. A portion of those costs are funded through reimbursements from federal sources but are expended as Other Funds. The requested \$33.5 million increase in the Other Funds expenditure limitation erroneously included costs allocated to the General

Fund. The actual increase in Other Funds expenditure limitation required by the agency totals just under \$25 million. This amount will allow the agency to process payments associated with fire costs funded from the Oregon Forest Land Protection Fund, other agency reimbursements, and FEMA grants.

Recommendation: The Legislative Fiscal Office recommends that the Emergency Board acknowledge the receipt of a report on the 2022 fire season from the Department of Forestry, including a preliminary report of losses on private lands of timber, buildings, fencing, livestock, and grazing land capacity if the land is expected to be unavailable for two or more grazing seasons; allocate \$5,988,093 General Fund from the special purpose appropriation made to the Emergency Board for the state's portion of 2022 fire season severity resources cost; allocate \$8,788,683 million General Fund from the special purpose appropriation made to the Emergency Board for the state's natural disaster prevention, preparedness, response and recovery activities, for the state's portion of net large-fire costs for the 2022 fire season; and increase the Other Funds expenditure limitation by \$24,999,724 for the Department of Forestry to enable processing of payments and cost of operations from the 2022 fire season.

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Department of Forestry
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Request: Allocate \$5,988,093 from a Special Purpose Appropriation made to the Emergency Board for the 2022 Fire Severity Costs. Allocate \$8,788,683 from the State Emergency Fund for the state's portion of net emergency fires costs for the 2022 Fire Season. Increase Other Funds expenditure limitation by \$33,504,119 for the processing of payments related to the 2022 Fire Season. Report on the 2022 Fire Season and losses of timber, private lands, buildings, fencing, livestock, and unavailability of grazing land capacity.

Recommendation: Approve the request and acknowledge receipt of the report.

Discussion:

2022 Fire Season Recap

The 2022 Fire Season started later than usual and fire activity was below average from April to July. The Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) prepared for a severe Fire Season due to early season predictive outlooks of below average snowpack, early snowmelt, and significant drought. As of the date of the report, all ODF districts remained in declared fire season. The report outlines the season included 820 fires on ODF-protected lands, which is 17 percent lower than the 10-year average of 986 fires. A total of 33,936 acres were burned which is 71 percent below the 10-year average of 117,860 acres.

Loss Reporting Summary (House Bill 2501)

House Bill 2501 (2015) requires ODF to report on fires impacting more than 1,000 acres of land and include losses of private timber lands, buildings, fencing and livestock, and grazing land expected to be unavailable for two or more grazing seasons. Currently, the department is making assessments of losses but has provided the following preliminary estimated information for the three fires meeting the criteria.

Fire	Private Forestland Acreage	Grazing Acreage	Number of Structures	Number of Livestock	Estimated Loss Amount (millions)
Rum Creek	21,347	-	8	-	\$32.5
Van Meter	481	544	13	-	\$1.5
Double Creek	1,195	8,685	6	-	\$2.0

Fire Season Expenditures

The department is still finalizing accounting for the 2022 Fire Season. Current estimates are over \$35 million of gross costs, with net costs of \$17.3 million, after recoveries from federal agencies and FEMA. ODF estimates total Severity Program spending of \$9.0 million, \$3 million of which is provided by the Oregon Forest Land Protection Fund, and the remaining \$6.0 million provided by the General Fund Special Purpose Appropriation.

Special Purpose Appropriation (SPA) Request

A Special Purpose Appropriation (SPA) of \$14 million was established in Senate Bill 5518 (2021), for fire protection expenses, which includes funding for a portion of the net costs associated with severity resources during the 2021-23 biennium. These funds are used to pre-

position resources so ODF can quickly respond to fire incidents in areas prone to large fires. ODF used this funding to contract for several new aviation sources, as well as ground-based resources to assist in initial attack efforts on fires across the state. The department reports the total net severity expenditures for the 2022 Fire Season at \$9.0 million and the General Fund portion of these costs at \$5,988,093.

General Fund Request

ODF is requesting \$8.8 million General Fund for the state's portion of net emergency fire costs for the 2022 Fire Season. The net fire costs represent the total expected to be paid by the General Fund and the Oregon Forest Land Protection Fund (OFLPF), the remainder is paid by federal partners, FEMA, insurance payouts, and in some cases responsible parties.

Other Funds Limitation Request

The department is also requesting \$33,504,119 Other Funds expenditure limitation to enable processing of payments and operations for the 2022 Fire Season. The Other Funds expenditure limitation is needed, due to the reimbursable basis of expenditures for the department in covering ongoing fire costs. The department currently estimates gross fire costs of \$130 million. While a large portion of this amount is reimbursable, payments to contractors and vendors need to be made in a timely manner and the department often doesn't receive reimbursement for months, or sometimes years, from federal partners and other responsible parties. To ensure payments are made on-time, ODF processes payments as invoices are received. To cover these payments, ODF will use Other Funds expenditure limitation.

Legal Reference: Allocation of \$8,788,683 from the State Emergency Fund to supplement the appropriation made by chapter 605, section 1(2), Oregon Laws 2021 for the Oregon Department of Forestry, Fire Protection Division for the 2021-23 biennium.

Allocation of \$5,988,093 from the Special Purpose Appropriation made to the Emergency Board by chapter 605, section 5(1), Oregon Laws 2021, to supplement the appropriation made by chapter 605, section 1(2), Oregon Laws 2021, for the Oregon Department of Forestry, Fire Protection Division for the 2021-23 biennium.

Increase Other Funds expenditure limitation established by chapter 605, section 2(2), Oregon Laws 2021, for the Oregon Department of Forestry, Fire Protection Division, by \$33,504,119 for the 2021-23 biennium.



Oregon

Kate Brown, Governor

Department of Forestry

State Forester's Office

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October 24, 2022

Senator Peter Courtney, Co-Chair
Representative Dan Rayfield, Co-Chair
Joint Emergency Board
900 Court Street NE
H-178 State Capitol
Salem, OR 97301

RE: 2022 Fire Season Request and Report

Dear Co-Chairs:

Nature of the Emergency/Request

The Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) respectfully requests permission to appear before the Joint Emergency Board at its December 2022 meeting for the purpose of providing:

1. The final report on the 2022 fire season in Oregon.
2. The preliminary report of losses on private lands of timber, buildings, fencing, livestock, and grazing land capacity if the land is expected to be unavailable for two or more grazing seasons as required by House Bill 2501.
3. Requesting, as required under ORS 477.777 (3), the release of \$5,988,093 in Special Purpose Appropriation (SPA) funds allocated to the Emergency Board for the state's portion of 2022 fire season severity costs.
4. Requesting \$8,788,683 General Fund for the state's portion of net large-fire costs for the 2022 fire season.
5. Requesting an additional \$33,504,119 of Other Funds Limitation to enable processing of payments and operations from the 2022 fire season.

Agency Action

2022 Fire Season Report

Fall weather patterns have yet to bring much needed rain that could significantly mitigate the potential for any new starts and moderate fire behavior on the remaining fires burning in the state. At the time of this letter, all ODF districts remain in the declared fire season.

Early season predictive outlooks indicated an increased probability of significant wildfire and an above average fire season in the state of Oregon. Below average snowpack in many areas, coupled with early snow melt and significant drought intensifying throughout the state, required early

preparation and heightened preparedness for the 2022 fire season. Seasonal firefighters were hired earlier and additional resources were at the ready to support increased initial attack and large fire potential projected for 2022.

The current statistics highlight the success of the department's preparedness efforts and initial attack this year despite conditions being favorable for large and significant wildfires. As of Oct. 17, 2022, there have been 820 fires on ODF-protected lands. This is 83% of the 10-year average of 986 fires. Acres burned are at 33,936, which is 29% of the 10-year average of 117,860 acres.

The fire-safe behaviors of Oregonians were also been a significant contributor to fire season successes thus far, with human-caused fires this year well below the 10-year average. Human-caused fires accounted for 601 of this year's total fires, and 2,013 acres burned. This is 82% of the 10-year average of 730 fires, and 3% of the 10-year average of 68,444 acres burned. There were 219 lightning fires this year, which is 86% of the 10-year average of 256, and 31,923 acres burned, which is 65% of the 10-year average of 49,416 acres burned. Across all jurisdictions in Oregon to date, 1,886 fires have burned 364,456 acres.

In addition, the agency's multi-mission aircraft with night vision and infrared technology had a very successful season with 92 flight hours and detected 56 fires that were previously undetected and unreported.

This fire season, the Oregon/Washington geographic area lingered at preparedness level (PL) 1 for 60 days, but August's heat and dry lightning brought new fire starts across the state, and September's east winds and low humidity provoked extreme fire behavior on existing fires in drought-stricken fuels. Preparedness levels ramped up to PL3 for 39 days in August and September and PL 4 for 15 days in September.

Fire activity in early 2022 was below average from April through July, and despite bleak fire season outlooks and drought, the start of fire season was delayed in several districts. ODF's Southwest Oregon District in Jackson and Josephine counties was the first to declare fire season on June 1, while several other districts waited until late June and early July to declare fire season.

In June and July, thunderstorms passed over Oregon, and trace but measurable precipitation provided relief to some areas experiencing exceptional drought, like central Oregon, and areas experiencing abnormally dry conditions, like the northwest corner of the state. But August brought several heat warnings and dry thunderstorm cells. ODF recorded 159 lightning fires in August from a total of 11,337 strikes across the state and acres burned ramped up from 199 at the end of July to 31,868 by the end of August. However, overall, preparedness, early detection, and aggressive initial attack kept 96% of fire starts to ten acres or less burned this year.

On Aug. 2, ODF provided mutual aid to Wasco County Fire on the Miller Road fire that threatened over 185 homes and prompted evacuations. The threat to structures made the fire Oregon's first eligible FEMA Fire Management Assistance Grant (FMAG) fire of the year, which authorized suppression cost reimbursement from FEMA to the state and cooperating agencies. The fire was

transitioned to an incident management team (IMT) from the Office of the State Fire Marshal (OSFM). While not on ODF-protected lands, ODF continued to assist by providing access to aviation resources and personnel as needed by the OSFM IMT for their structural protection work. The Miller Road fire ultimately burned 10,847 acres.

On Aug. 27, ODF's IMT 1 mobilized to the Rum Creek fire near the town of Merlin. This lightning-caused fire started on Aug. 17 and had been managed by a regional IMT (federal interagency team). When the fire became more complex and threatened the communities of Galice and Rand, ODF, the Office of the State Fire Marshal, and a regional federal IMT entered into unified command of the fire. Cooler temperatures and rain showers, remnants of Tropical Storm Kay, decreased fire activity significantly. The Rum Creek fire ultimately burned a total of 21,347 acres in Josephine County.

Also on Aug. 27, Governor Kate Brown declared a state of emergency due to the imminent threat of wildfire across Oregon based on much of the state experiencing high temperatures, wind, thunderstorms with dry lightning, and persistent drought.

On Aug. 30, the Double Creek fire was started by lightning above the town of Imnaha on Grizzly Ridge in the Wallowa Mountains of northeast Oregon. OSFM joined the federal teams managing the fire to provide for structural protection when evacuations were declared for Imnaha and Hat Point areas. As of Oct. 17, the fire is 89% contained at 171,532 acres.

On Sept. 7, ODF's IMT 3 mobilized to the Van Meter fire on Stukel Mountain near the city of Klamath Falls. Safe but aggressive firefighting contained this fire at 2,639 acres, despite hot, dry, and windy weather and record-low fuel moistures.

An east wind/off-shore wind flow event reminiscent of, but not as severe as, Labor Day 2020 was forecasted for the weekend of Sept. 8-10, for areas east and west of the Cascades Mountains, as well as north-central Oregon. These strong, warm, dry winds reduce humidity and exacerbate fire behavior and growth on any existing fires.

In preparation for the wind event, the department moved personnel, equipment and aircraft to the areas of highest risk. At the local level, many ODF protection districts canceled days off to ensure they had the maximum number of firefighters available to respond. ODF staff also remained in close contact with the incident management teams handling the large fires on the landscape at the time due to concerns about significant, rapid spread during high winds. This connection helped local leadership stay up-to-date on nearby fire activity to ensure they were ready to defend ODF-protected lands if necessary.

One of the fires ODF was tracking closely was the Cedar Creek fire on the Willamette National Forest. This fire was caused by lightning and had been burning on federal land on the west and east sides of the Cascade crest since Aug. 1, 2022. Shortly after the wind event began, the entire town of Oakridge was put on level 3 evacuation. Oakridge is on a major throughway (Highway 58) and has a population of over 3,000, with over 1,400 households. Despite the imminent threat to a major town with a variety of mixed density wildland-urban interface areas where homes intermingle with

wildlands, an FMAG application for the Cedar Creek fire was denied. As of Oct. 17, the fire has burned 126,222 acres and is 50% contained.

On Sept. 9, the Milo McIver fire near Estacada threatened 550 homes, as well as the state park. ODF and Estacada Fire District headed up the response. With support from several other local fire districts, the fire was stopped at 25 acres. Due to the threat to structures, this fire qualified as Oregon’s second FEMA FMAG fire for the season. On the same evening, the Vitae Springs fire started just south of Salem. Salem Fire and OSFM quickly called for ODF assistance. ODF supplied two water-scooping airtankers and a helicopter from the ODF severity program, three 20-person handcrews from ODF’s resource agreements and an experienced incident commander. The fire burned 164 acres and more than 100 homes were evacuated, but it ultimately did not meet the threshold for FEMA FMAG assistance.

This fire season, the Oregon National Guard contributed a helicopter for medical evacuation coverage for multiple fires and personnel to staff traffic control points on the Rum Creek and Double Creek incidents.

Fire season estimated costs

The department spent a significant amount of its biennial funding on suppression efforts to protect natural resources, communities and Oregonians during the 2022 fire season. Experience has shown us the importance of a diverse fire funding system to respond to seasons like this one. The system created over time—with the support of landowners, the Legislature, and the Governor’s Office— involves shared responsibility among landowners, the state’s General Fund, and a \$25 million insurance policy—the only one of its kind nationally.

The estimated gross fire costs for the 2022 season are \$35,026,259. Net fire costs are currently estimated at \$17,293,078. This includes \$284,288 incurred during the 2022 fiscal year that exceeded the OFLPF \$10 million cap. The state’s total share of the estimated net fire costs is \$8,788,683 and is part of the department’s General Fund request.

Increase in Other Funds Limitation Request

As a result of covering the gross costs of the 2022 fire season, the department is projected to exceed its Other Funds (OF) limitation. To ensure that funding is available to continue all department operations, the department is requesting an additional \$33,504,119 in OF limitation.

Special Purpose Appropriation Severity Program

The department’s severity program—funded through a special purpose appropriation (SPA)— maintains a pool of additional resources available for statewide use when fire conditions are most severe. At the conclusion of each fire season, the department requests reimbursement for severity costs from the SPA through the Emergency Board.

This fire season, the department contracted for one large air tanker, eight medium helicopters, one small helicopter, five single-engine airtankers, two water-scooper airtankers, two detection planes

and several ground-based resources. The statewide severity program resources are in addition to district aviation resources already positioned throughout the state. Additional aviation and ground resources were added to the pool during periods of very high fire danger and increased fire activity. There were also call-when-needed contracts and local resource agreements to augment the exclusive-use contracts.

The resources provided through the severity program are critical to keeping fires as small as possible. In 2022, 97 percent of fires that started on ODF-protected lands were kept to 10 acres or less. Severity aircraft flew a total of 995 hours on incidents and delivered approximately 955,687 gallons of water, gel and long-term retardant to wildfires across the state. A breakdown of flight time by resource type is provided below:

- Single-engine airtankers and water-scooper airtankers: 399 hours
- Large airtanker: 95 hours
- Helicopters (small and medium): 345 hours and 2,191 buckets dropped
- Detection planes: 156 hours

With the passage of House Bill 2050 during the 2013 Legislative Session, the annual SPA funding of \$2 million for the severity program was matched with up to \$3 million annually from the OFLPF, for total severity funding of \$5 million. In the 2021-23 biennial budget, an additional \$5 million of General Fund was added to the SPA, for a total of \$10 million. The SPA request for the 2022 fire season is currently estimated at \$8,988,093. The OFLPF share is \$3 million, and the General Fund share is \$5,988,093.

Fire prevention

Fire prevention is always a primary focus for the department. This year, coordinated public outreach campaigns—in collaboration with our local, state and federal agency partners and Keep Oregon Green—started in May and continued throughout fire season. When all 12 ODF protection districts found themselves in extreme fire danger the week of Sept. 8, public use restrictions were increased, which prohibited activities likely to start wildfires, such as campfires, small equipment use and off-road driving. The Oregon Department of Transportation supported prevention efforts by using their highway reader boards to alert people of the extreme fire danger.

HB2501 Preliminary Report on Losses on Private Lands

The department is required to report on wildfires more than 1,000 acres regarding the losses on private lands of timber, buildings, fencing and livestock, and of grazing land capacity if the land is expected to be unavailable for two or more grazing seasons (ORS 477.777). During the 2022 fire season, three fires met this reporting criteria. This preliminary loss assessment report is consistent with the expectation of law but limited by the time, capacity, and expertise required to conduct a fair and comprehensive assessment of loss relative to what the state has experienced. As a result, these numbers are likely to change in the coming months.

The Rum Creek fire impacted 21,347 acres of public and private forestland and destroyed eight structures, two of which were homes. The total damage of this wildfire is estimated at \$32.5 million.

The Van Meter fire burned 481 acres of timber and 544 acres of privately-owned grazing lands. Thirteen minor structures were destroyed. The total damage of this wildfire is estimated at \$1.5 million.

The Double Creek fire burned 1,195 acres of timber and 8,685 acres of privately-owned grazing lands. Six minor structures were destroyed. The total damage of this wildfire is estimated at \$2 million.

Action Requested

ODF respectfully requests that the Joint Emergency Board:

1. Acknowledge and accept ODF's final report on the 2022 fire season in Oregon.
2. Acknowledge and accept the preliminary report of losses on private lands of timber, buildings, fencing, livestock, and grazing land capacity if the land is expected to be unavailable for two or more grazing seasons required by HB2501.
3. Allocate \$5,988,093 from the Special Purpose Appropriation (SPA) funds allocated to the Emergency Board for the state's portion of 2022 fire season severity costs.
4. Allocate \$8,788,683 of General Fund for the state's portion of net emergency fire costs for the 2022 fire season.
5. Request an additional \$33,504,119 of Other Funds Limitation to enable processing of payments and operations from the 2022 fire season.

Legislation Affected

SB 5518, Chapter 605, Section 1(2), Oregon Laws 2021

SB 5518, Chapter 605, Section 2(2), Oregon Laws 2021

SB 5518, Chapter 605, Section 5(1), Oregon Laws 2021

Sincerely,



Cal Mukumoto
Oregon State Forester
(503) 945-7211

c: Jason Miner, Governor's Office
Oregon Board of Forestry
Matt Stayner, Legislative Fiscal Office
Sione Filimoehala, Chief Financial Office