



FIRE DISTRICT NEWS

December 5, 2022

House Special Committee on Wildfire Recovery
Sent via email to: hwrec.exhibits@oregonlegislature.gov

RE: For the record of the December 9th meeting of the Committee

Dear Chairman Evans,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the local rebuilding efforts to the House Special Committee on Wildfire Recovery. Jackson County Fire District No. 5 and the Rogue Valley communities we protect continue to be severely impacted by the Labor Day Fires. While a rigorous effort has been underway to recover from the September 8, 2020 Almeda Firestorm, there is still work to be done.

The focus of the allied agencies has been threefold: repopulation and rebuilding, hardening and mitigation and capacity and response. Primarily due to the remarkable endeavors of the State of Oregon and specifically the House Special Committee, we are just getting back on our feet. There is still a long way to go.

In order to limit the impacts of another drought/wind driven wildland fire, the hazardous fuels mitigation projects and community outreach efforts that have just started must continue for years to come. This is a massive undertaking requiring federal, state, local and private/nonprofit cooperators to work cohesively. As you are no doubt aware, this can't be accomplished without continued support. Additionally, the enhanced firefighting forces, that were so instrumental in limiting the spread of catastrophic events this past fire season, are vital to protecting our rebuilt neighborhoods and forest dwellings.

While we cannot entirely eliminate the possibility of conflagrations, we have seen that a united front can make a difference. Timely response and weight of fire attack have been shown to limit the spread of fire. Studies consistently find that thinning followed by prescribed fire has the most dramatic impact on fire behavior. Protecting lives and values at risk, especially newly rebuilt housing and businesses in the wildland interface, remains our highest priority.

Under other circumstances, the results we have achieved thus far would not have been possible without the tireless advocacy of the House Special Committee on Wildfire Recovery. Keeping this essential link to state government is a benefit to all your constituents.

Charles Hanley

FIRE CHIEF
Jackson County Fire District No.5