



December 07, 2022

**Clackamas County Board of Commissioners
Policy Position
Related to Wildfire Recovery and Preparedness**

As a fire affected jurisdiction, Clackamas County is grateful for the state legislature's quick and decisive actions to advance SB 762 – Oregon's "north star" on wildfire recovery and preparedness. We are thankful for the open dialogue on wildfire recovery and prevention as Oregon navigates how best to adapt to longer, drier fire seasons.

The September 2020 wildfires burned roughly 190,000 acres in Clackamas County, affecting over 60 homes and 200 various other structures. Over 50,000 people were asked to evacuate or were within regions where evacuation was imminent. Many of these residents are still in recovery and rebuilding. Highway 224 east of Estacada, a major recreation corridor and economic development generator for local communities, was closed for managing post-fire cleanup and road repairs and only re-opened to the public in May 2022.

Since the 2020 fires, Clackamas County has formed an Emergency Preparedness Council to support geographically representational community engagement with the County Board and Disaster Management Department. The County is currently working with all of its fire districts on updating the Community Wildfire Protection Plan to help secure wildfire mitigation grant opportunities. During May of 2022, the County recognized National Wildfire Awareness Month by collaborating with fire districts to host eleven public meetings to promote wildfire safety, emergency alert registration, and evacuation planning efforts. Our most well attended meeting was a Spanish language-focused event in the city of Canby. Clackamas Fire District #1 recently hired a full time Wildland Program Manager who will be working with all fire districts on wildfire mitigation planning and projects. There is an enormous amount of attention being paid to long-term watershed health and forest recovery in the Riverside fire burn areas by the Clackamas River Water Providers.

As Oregon moves forward, Clackamas asks for better integration of purpose, scope, and authorities of these wildfire programs from ODF, OSFM, DLCDC and others as it applies to local government oversight and any enforcement. We also ask for a coordinated agency rollout of programs stemming from SB 762, rather than a piecemeal approach resulting in each state agency holding individual community meetings on their areas of focus. A coordinated rollout will best utilize the community's availability and de-conflict any issues on how the different issue areas may work together, especially through local planning processes like the Community Wildfire Protection Plans.

Lastly, Clackamas County is aware of community members who were impacted by the Public Safety Power Shutoff (PSPS) events and the unintended consequences of the loss of communications, like cell and Wi-Fi coverage. In rural areas, in particular, many people are left stranded in “quiet zones” that cannot send or receive critical emergency communications, such as calling 9-1-1 or being informed to evacuate following a wildfire ignition. Other PSPS zones may have similar issues, and Clackamas County would welcome information sharing from the State PUC on any solutions that have been explored between communication utilities working with PUC-regulated electric utilities like PGE.

Please contact Chris Lyons at clyons@clackamas.us for more information.