

From: [John Core](#)
To: [HWREC Exhibits](#)
Cc: [Jan Wierima](#); [Laurie Larson Caesar](#)
Subject: House Special Committee on Wildfire Response Testimony
Date: Sunday, February 14, 2021 12:13:49 PM

House Special Committee on Wildfire Recovery
February 15, 2021 Public Hearing, Canyon and Valley Regions
Representative Brian Clem, Chair
Representative Rick Lewis, Vice-Chair
Representative Pan Marsh, Vice-Chair

Sunday, February 14, 2021

Testimony Submitted by Oregon Synod ELCA Lutheran Disaster Response

Dear Chairman Clem,

On the evening of September 7, 2020 my wife and I were alerted by an Upper McKenzie Volunteer Fire fireman that we needed to immediately evacuate our house on the McKenzie River in Rainbow due to a rapidly advancing wildfire. Within minutes, we gathered a few items from our house and fled for Eugene. That evening, we lost our house, all of it's contents, one vehicle and a home we loved. Our property and much of the McKenzie River Valley were devastated by the Holiday Farm fire. It will take decades to rebuild everything that was lost. We have relocated to Portland. My thoughts as a wildfire survivor are as follows:

Recovery begins with implementing the recommendations of the Governor's Wildfire Council on Wildfire Response to minimize the risk of future fires. Significantly, as the climate changes, we will experience more drought and extreme fire weather similar to what we saw on September 7th of last year. Mitigating that risk requires a hard look at electrical power line fire-related issues which likely sparked the Holiday Farm fire. Solving this problem will be a long an expensive task but this should be a high priority for the Oregon Legislature.

For now, the Oregon Synod of the ELCA Church, Lutheran Disaster Response is focused on helping the McKenzie Valley community recover from this great loss. We are partners with Lane County and others on the Valley Long Term Recovery Team and will be helping fire survivors with sheltering, food and emotional care needs. The immediate needs of the McKenzie Valley are many and immediate: housing, internet/cell phone connectivity needed to restore community businesses and distant education opportunities, rebuild infrastructure and the economy of the valley. Many survivors are in need to emotional care which is an area that we feel we can help with.

In other wildfire affected areas of Oregon, Oregon Synod ELCA is working with Oregon Emergency Management, other Long Term Recovery Groups and the Oregon Volunteers Active During Disasters (Oregon VOAD). All of this work is being done with the wonderful support of our national Lutheran Disaster Response partners in Chicago.

We appreciate the Special Committee's interest in wildfire recovery. I am hopeful that together, we can rebuild the McKenzie Valley into the beautiful place it once was. Please join us.

Sincerely,

John Core, Oregon Synod Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) Disaster
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