

Prescribed Fire for Healthy Forests and Safe Communities



Fire has always been a part of Oregon's landscape, but while large areas of Oregon's forests depend on fire to maintain health and function, the 20th Century emphasized full exclusion of fire from forests. After more than a century of suppressing wildfires, our dry forests are overgrown, unhealthy, and at increased risk of larger, more intense and severe wildfires.

Prescribed fire, also known as controlled burning, is one solution to this problem. Prescribed fire - the intentional application of fire to live or dead vegetation for land management purposes - mimics natural fires and is very effective at reducing hazardous fuels and restoring ecological conditions. Strategically designed by a team of certified fire experts and only conducted under the safest conditions, careful consideration is given to many factors, including the weather and wind, to ensure that the fire practitioners and nearby communities are safe and protected.

Not only does prescribed fire restore the health of forests and reduce wildfire risk to communities, it can also save significant money. The cost of conducting a prescribed fire can be exponentially less than suppressing wildfires, particularly when factoring in recovery and rehabilitation costs. With millions of acres of Oregon in need of restoration, it's time to increase use of prescribed fire in Oregon to improve forest health, save money, and protect communities.





What are the barriers to fixing the problem?

Beyond additional financial resources, capacity, and incentives, the most commonly cited barriers to increased use of prescribed fire in Oregon are concerns about liability, ability to secure insurance for prescribed burns, uncertainty about regulations, and the need for additional expertise and staffing to administer burns. A new paradigm requires both legal and social changes that empower landowners to work with fire as part of forest management, rather than waiting to respond to summer wildfire when it is hardest to control.

There are multiple paths forward to reduce these barriers. Other states are successfully conducting millions of acres of prescribed burns each year to reduce wildfire risk and support healthy ecosystems. Oregon has an opportunity to learn from these experiences and make policy changes for similar benefit.

We Have Solutions.

HB 2571 is a study to understand legal and insurance barriers to conducting more prescribed fire in Oregon, and reviews policies and best practices from other states. This information will be used to inform future prescribed fire policies and incentives.

HB 2572 launches the State Certified Burn Manager program that is already in statute and ensures that neighboring property owners can work together to plan and execute prescribed burns. By expanding the pool of qualified fire professionals and developing more transparent programs, we can improve performance and efficiency, increase safety, lower costs, reduce liability concerns, and increase the likelihood of private insurance backing and investments in prescribed fire actions.

For more information, please contact:

Rep. Pam Marsh at 503-986-1405 or Rep.PamMarsh@oregonlegislature.gov

Amelia Porterfield, The Nature Conservancy at 503-803-5863 or a.m.porterfield@tnc.org

Dylan Kruse, Sustainable Northwest at (303) 328-7524 or dkruse@sustainablenorthwest.org