



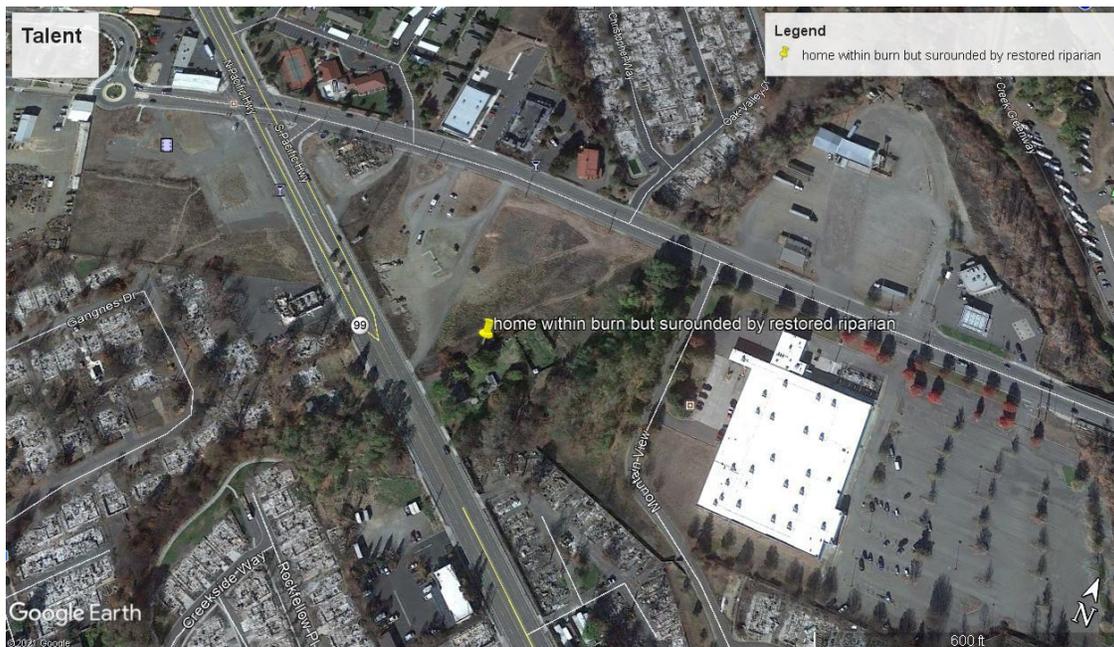
March 4, 2021
Representative Evans
House Committee On Veterans and Emergency Management
Re: Written Testimony in Support of HB 3160

Willamette Partnership submits written testimony in support of HB 3160 to enable additional revenue for fire resilience and recovery actions. Willamette Partnership is a conservation non-profit with a deep commitment to building stronger, healthier, and more equitable communities. We work with communities across Oregon to change how they build infrastructure, protect water sources and critical habitat, and manage farms and forests in ways that strengthen community resilience.

After this fall's fires, Willamette Partnership supported counties and other stakeholders as they responded to fires in the Rogue, McKenzie, and Santiam River valleys. In particular, we have helped communities put applications together for FEMA's Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities--a program that invests in avoiding the next disaster.

In the fires, well-managed forests and riparian areas, with less invasive understory, burned less intensely and quickly. That result alone created defensible space and saved structures in the Talent and McKenzie areas. This kind of restoration is exactly what OWEB and ODF are good at, and we need more of it. Figure 1 shows a restoration site in Talent (yellow pin). Friends of Wagner Creek restored the site and the local SWCD and The Freshwater Trust advised landowners on invasive blackberry removal. Those actions kept a home from burning.

Figure 1. Restoration site in the middle of the Almeda Fire



After the fire, many of FEMA's disaster resilience programs require local match, which was a barrier to getting an application together for the Santiam canyon. In fact, Oregon ranks 34 of 50 states in securing pre-disaster mitigation funding from FEMA¹. We are leaving money on the table that Oregon communities need. State funding, like that created by HB 3160, create funds that can leverage work with private landowners and federal agencies.

What the restoration work in the McKenzie and the Rogue's Bear Creek show is that an ounce of prevention saves a whole lot of heartache and catastrophe further down the road. That kind of risk reduction not only saves lives, but also helps save the state money in fire fighting and recovery, and saves the cost to the private and public sector in filling insurance claims and helping people rebuild.

We support the kinds of proactive measures included in HB 3160.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bobby Cochran', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Bobby Cochran
Partner, Community Resilience & Innovation
Willamette Partnership
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¹ <https://willamettepartnership.org/water-investment-ready-oregon/>