



# Oregon

Kate Brown, Governor

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Representative Brad Witt, Chair  
House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources  
Oregon State Capitol  
900 Court Street  
Salem, OR 97301

**RE: House Bill 2795**

Dear Chair Witt and members of the committee,

The Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill 2795.

HB 2795 allocates \$5 million to the department to pursue Good Neighbor Authority agreements to facilitate projects that reduce wildfire risk or provide for other forest, rangeland, and water restoration services through the activities described in ORS 526.275.

ODF has been mitigating wildfire risk mitigation on Federal Forest since 2013 when the Legislature took the innovative step to develop a Federal Forests Restoration Program in response to the Board of Forestry's recommendation to accelerate active management on federal forests. The recommendation was in response to increased fire risk on federal lands. Over the last three decades, we have seen continual increases in acres burned across all jurisdiction in Oregon. During these last 30 years, 92-93% of all burned acres were on land outside ODF jurisdiction, which is mostly federal land. Federal lands also account for 60% of forested lands in Oregon. Any efforts to reduce wildfire risks in Oregon, must involve federal lands in a meaningful way. The Legislature made this work a permanent part of our budget in 2017.

Oregon first embarked on work under Good Neighbor Authority (GNA) in 2016, and since then we have made some significant progress in wildfire risk reduction on federal lands. To date, 23,864 acres of fuels reduction and forest thinning projects have been completed or are in progress; nine projects covering 24,716 acres planned through the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process; and 184 acres of prescribed fire completed or in progress.

The Legislature's investments in GNA work have been integral to restoring forests, reducing fuels, and promoting good stewardship of Oregon's forestlands. House Bill 4118, passed in the 2018 regular session, was a vital funding source for the Federal Forest Restoration (FFR)

Program and kick started NEPA and GNA work in Oregon. It allowed ODF to make significant steps forward in alleviating key bottlenecks to increasing federal forest restoration.

This bill enabled the state to take an innovative approach to addressing some of the capacity issues that have impeded federal land management processes in the past. The state took the lead in contracting out the time-consuming surveys, analysis, and detailed documentation associated with planning forest restoration projects under NEPA. One of the key tenets of the FFR Program, and work under the GNA, is to be additive. These investments allowed the state to add value to the federal planning process that increased the pace of getting acres ready for treatment.

The funding in HB 2795 would support additional EPA planning work and the surveys that are necessary for these projects. The funding would be used to implement NEPA-ready fuels reduction treatments that our federal partners do not have the workforce or funding to implement currently. These on-the-ground projects are critical in eastern and southern Oregon, where thinning treatments cost more than the by-products they generate, thus necessitating outside funding. The funds would also be used to provide prescribed fire support.

HB 2795 tracks with similar investments being pursued in California and Washington that achieve similar wildfire reduction outcomes on federal lands.

I appreciate this committee's willingness to hear this bill, which responds to the recommendations of the Governor's Council on Wildfire Response and recognizes the critical role restoration and management of federal lands plays in building safe, sustainable, and resilient forested landscapes across Oregon. Please feel free to contact me directly if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Jeff Burns  
Partnership and Planning Program Director

c.  
Jason Miner, Governor's Natural Resources Policy Advisor  
Peter Daugherty, State Forester, ODF