

I strongly support this bill, especially after experiencing some of the danger and fear experienced by many Oregonians during the 2020 fire season. Many residents not aware of the dangers previously were thrust into terrifying circumstances of losing or coming close to losing the lives of loved ones or property, figuring out how to evacuate themselves and their animals, or facing serious health consequences from smoke and poor air quality. I live on Bald Peak/Chehalem Mountain, where there was a smaller, but still very scary, wildfire in the fall of 2020. Many of my neighbors had to evacuate, and that zone came within less than a mile of our house. So we also had to prepare to leave. And with ongoing drought and climate change, the prospects for this happening again in the coming years seem likely.

A more specific issue: due to tax incentives, many small plots of Douglas firs were planted and then not thinned or maintained in my area. We have such a stand of trees, planted by the previous owner of our property and can ill-afford to have 50+ trees removed. I just wonder whether similar plots of trees around the state may pose a widespread danger that hasn't been considered.

Oregonians need help! We, and many of our neighbors, have been working urgently since last fall to learn about and enlarge safety zones and enhance safety in other ways, but cutting down large trees is expensive and beyond our capacity, and there are many landowners who are not acting to improve fire safety. We have resources that many don't have, and we feel overburdened and a bit helpless at times! I can't imagine how some of my elderly, disabled or less financially secure neighbors may feel. A general fund to help homeowners and communities with fire safety, if administered well and fairly, seems like a great idea.