

OREGON LEGISLATURE HOUSE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON WILDFIRE RECOVERY
Written Comments from Gary and Pamela Parker, Taylor Park Rd SE, Lyons, Oregon

SUBJECT: SEPTEMBER 8, 2020 OREGON WILDFIRES

First off, let us say thank you for holding this hearing so you can understand what we have gone through since September 2020. We will appreciate any further assistance you can provide to help us get back to where we were on September 7, 2020.

Since Gary was born in Salem back in 1947, he has longed to move back and wanted to find a peaceful place for us to retire to after he was finished with his career in structural drafting. We moved to Lyons back in December 2013 after finding a great place inside a gated community overlooking the Little North Santiam River. Our plan was to enjoy the rest of our lives in peace and paradise. We had fixed up our property and our manufactured home with this in mind. Gary built a deck and cover and a spa deck for us so we could enjoy our lives with our family members who live down in Wilton, California. He also added a large woodworking shop to the mix. With the 44 trees on the property, we truly were living in paradise in the forest.

Our daughter Hillary and her youngest daughter Audrey were up visiting from Sacramento that day, and had a great time on the river both Sunday and Monday. On Monday, September 7, 2020, I got a call that my mom had passed away down in Sacramento, California and had to deal with that loss. Then, at 5:00 p.m. that afternoon, the winds started coming down the river like a freight train, knocking down trees, limbs, etc. It was pretty frightening. The power also went out and we had to use our generator to keep the lights on. At 11:00 p.m., we decided to go to bed. At 1:39 a.m., Tuesday, September 8, 2020, we were awakened by sirens coming up our road. My husband ran outside to find out what the issue was. As we all ran outside, it was snowing ash and was so smokey we couldn't breathe. The sheriffs came in to evacuate us immediately. We had no warning that there was a fire right around the corner from us up the river. Apparently, a tree went down on the power lines at the 5 mile marker on Northfork RD across the river from us. We live at the 3.9 mile point. Apparently, 5 people died at the 5 mile location. Eventually the Beachie Creek Wildfire joined with this wildfire.

We were able to grab a few items and get into our vehicles to get out of the area. We left our place at 1:45 a.m. and the fire hit our place at 2:00 a.m. Our eastern neighbor had 2 trail cams on his property and one of them survived. The video showed the time of the fire coming around the corner and wiping out everything in it's path. Only our western neighbor's place survived mostly intact. Taylor Park Road had a lot of loss all the way down.

We lost our manufactured home, the deck and cover, the hot tub and deck, stairs down to the river, Gary's newly finished woodworking shop, my she shed with 27 bins of holiday decorations, bins of family photos and old nic nacs, the lawn shed with the lawn mower, our paid off 2011 ram truck, our 2016 travel trailer, and 38 trees. These items were completely destroyed and I have included some before and after photos at the end.

So far we have been able to replace the manufactured home, most of the furniture, and financed a 2017 ram truck to replace the burned one. The rest of the loss is still pending replacement.

Immediately after the fire, we were able to stay with family in Salem so we started out okay at first. We also were able to stay at our daughters down in Wilton, California.

Once we realized the level of devastation on our property, we started the process of making insurance claims. This is when we discovered just how underinsured we were. There was no were near enough insurance to cover replacing things.

By the time we got all of the insurance payouts, we had just enough cash to order a new manufactured home the same size and style. It costs twice the amount of the previous home and that's all it was insured for. Everything else has come out of our pockets and with help from others.

So far, we have had help from many unexpected places to get us where we are now, but we are far from where we were before the fire. We are working on State grants to help us get closer, but not sure where those will take us.

Without family and friends we would have had a really hard time trying to get through all of this devastation.

Any further assistance such as grants and donations would be greatly helpful.