

ANALYSIS

Item 21: Department of Forestry 2023 Fire Season

Analyst: April McDonald

Request: Acknowledge the receipt of a report on the 2023 fire season and the preliminary report on private losses of timber, buildings, fencing, livestock, and grazing land capacity.

Analysis: The Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) is reporting on the 2023 fire season, which includes a preliminary report on private property losses from fires of 1,000 acres or more, as required by HB 2501 (2015).

Report on the 2023 Fire Season

The Department's 2023 fire season report provides details including, but not limited to, weather and fuel conditions, individual fire statistics, and ODF response and coordination by region. The fire season was characterized by continuing drought and periods of record-breaking heat in mid-May through July, followed by intermittent thunderstorms in August, and cooling events with rain in September. At the time of the report dated October 9, 2023, seven of the 12 Forest Protection Districts remained in declared fire season. On October 20, 2023, ODF distributed the final fire season update, reporting a season closure for all ODF districts and Forest Protective Associations by October 18, 2023.

Statistics provided in the report illustrate the 10-year average for the number of fires on ODF-protected lands, the number of acres burned, and the number of human-caused fires. The number of 2023 fires on ODF-protected lands aligns very closely to the 10-year average, while the number of acres burned represents only 14% of the 10-year average. Per the report, an estimated 1,784 fires have burned 188,726 acres across Oregon's statewide jurisdictions. This includes 967 fires and 16,975 acres on ODF-protected lands; representing 54% of the statewide fires and 9% of the total statewide acres burned.

Gross fire costs for the 2023 season were reported at \$73.8 million. After subtracting anticipated Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Fire Management Assistance grants of \$3.8 million; anticipated federal agency cost reimbursements of \$25.7 million; local fire district costs of \$2.8 million; and the Oregon Forest Land Protection Fund contribution of \$11.3 (including both FY23 and FY24); the net emergency fire cost to the state is estimated at \$24 million.

ODF's Severity Program provides firefighting aircraft and other resources available for statewide use when fire conditions are most severe. The estimated 2023 fire season costs for this program total just over \$9 million and would be eligible for an allocation from an Emergency Board special purpose appropriation of \$14 million, established for ODF fire protection expenses.

Report on Private Land Losses

The Department is required to report on wildfires of 1,000 acres or more, which have led to private land losses of timber, buildings, fencing and livestock, and grazing land capacity if the land is expected to be unavailable for two or more grazing seasons (ORS 477.777). During the 2023 fire season, four such fires met this reporting criteria; the Golden fire, the Cougar Creek fire, the Lighthouse #3 fire, and the Kelly fire. Combined, these fires consumed 11,165 public and privately-owned acres, 9,028 of which were

timberland. Additionally, 48 inhabited structures and 69 outbuildings were destroyed. The estimated cost of this damage totals \$24.7 million.

Recommendation: The Legislative Fiscal Office recommends that the Joint Interim Committee on Ways and Means acknowledge receipt of the report.

Request: Report on the 2023 Wildfire season. Preliminary report on losses on private lands of timber, buildings, fencing, livestock, and grazing land capacity.

Recommendation: Acknowledge receipt of the report.

Discussion: The Department of Forestry (ODF) is presenting the annual report on the most current fire season, which includes a preliminary report on losses from fires of 1,000 acres or more as required by House Bill 2501 (2015). At the time of the initial report on October 9, 2023, seven of the 12 Fire Protection Districts in Oregon remained in declared fire season, which concluded by October 18, 2023. ODF provided updated materials on October 20, 2023, which included 975 fires and 17,968 acres burned during the 2023 fire season. The estimated gross cost of fire suppression activities remains at \$73.8 million, with a net cost of \$35.2 million for the 2023 fire season following the updates. The estimated General Fund share of net costs is \$24.0 million and costs for severity and prepositioning total \$9.0 million for the season. The number of fires seen during the 2023 fire season are comparable to the 10-year average number of fires of 1,044 though the number of acres burned of 17,968 is significantly lower compared to the 10-year average of 119,856.

The 2023 fire season followed weather patterns throughout the late spring into the early fall of 2023. The season was characterized by heat, low humidity, lightning, and wind events before the rains began in September, which signaled the end of the fire season. An early heat event in May, followed by two more heat events by the mid-summer. In July, low levels of humidity, wind events, and heat advisories brought rise to the Golden Fire, which burned 2,137 acres, destroyed 48 homes, and damaged fiber optic infrastructure. Throughout August, thunderstorm activity was monitored closely throughout the state. In late August, over 1,000 lightning strikes touched down over a single night, producing over 100 fire starts. One particularly difficult fire, the Tyee Ridge Complex which threatened 147 homes, required an extended timeline to fight due to terrain and high levels of fuels present. Temporary relief in cooling and rains also came in late August, followed by a brief warm and dry period in September. In the last week of September, heavy rains west of the Cascade Mountain Range reduced fire activities and signaled the end of the 2023 fire season.

During the 2023 fire season, 48 inhabited structure and 69 additional buildings were destroyed by the Golden Fire. Between the Cougar Creek, Lighthouse #3 (part of the Tyee Ridge Complex), and Kelly fires, 9,028 acres of public and privately-owned timberlands had burned.



Oregon

Tina Kotek, Governor

Department of Forestry
State Forester's Office
2600 State St
Salem, OR 97310-0340
503-945-7200
www.oregon.gov/ODF

October 9, 2023

Senator Elizabeth Steiner, Co-Chair
Representative Tawna Sanchez, Co-Chair
Interim Joint Committee on Ways and Means
900 Court Street NE
H-178 State Capitol
Salem, OR 97301

RE: 2023 Fire Season Report

Dear Co-Chairs:

Nature of the Request

The Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) respectfully requests permission to appear before the Interim Joint Committee on Ways and Means at its November 2023 meeting for the purpose of providing:

1. The final report on the 2023 fire season in Oregon.
2. The preliminary report of losses on private lands of timber, buildings, fencing, livestock, and grazing land capacity if the land is expected to be unavailable for two or more grazing seasons as required by House Bill 2501.

Agency Action

2023 Fire Season Report

Fire Season 2023 was characterized by continuing drought and pulses of elevated, record-breaking heat events starting in mid-May through July. In August a period of intermittent but expected thunderstorms ignited several fires in western Oregon. Then in very late August and September, pulses of cool onshore flow and a season slowing event with wetting rains began to push the region closer toward the end of fire season. At the time of this letter, 7 of the 12 Forest Protection Districts remain in declared fire season, but the potential for large significant fire has been moderated to a great extent.

At the beginning of the season, central and eastern Oregon were predisposed to severe to exceptional drought. But western Oregon, already abnormally dry especially in the western Cascades foothills, began to experience repeated heat waves which rapidly melted the above-normal snowpack accumulated in winter and which quickly dried vegetation growing vigorously from spring rains. Drought conditions worsened and expanded from the Cascades mountains toward the coast.

The first heat event on May 13th affected the entirety of western Oregon. Heat records were tied and broken in the Willamette Valley including Portland, Eugene, and Salem, and even in Astoria at the tip of the northwest coast. The National Significant Wildland Fire Potential Outlook predicted normal potential in May statewide, but above normal potential in June for central and north-central Oregon. An early season ignition, the Tower Road Fire, burned 2,750 acres on USFWS Refuge lands near Boardman, Oregon on May 21st. Like the Tower Road Fire, other large significant fires in June were mainly other agency fires occurring where the National Outlook had predicted, like the Hat Rock fire in Umatilla County burning 16,816 acres, the Dillon Creek fire burning 1,300 acres on the Fremont-Winema National Forest in Klamath County where heat advisories had been issued, the Mt. Hebron fire near Pendleton at 370 acres, and Milepost 87 fire near The Dalles at 150 acres. ODF Northeast Oregon District (NEO) reported the Wade Gulch fire which burned 50 protected acres, the Albee Fire at 44 protected acres, and the Stewart Creek fire at 375 protected acres burned.

Another pulse of heat occurred June 4th affecting the Willamette Valley and western Cascades foothills. At this time, while extreme wildfires in eastern Canada began to take hold and brought heavy smoke into the northeastern seaboard of the U.S., Oregon's and the Pacific Northwest's fire activity was well within normal to below-normal conditions, with ODF tracking 26% of the 10-year annual average of fires, but notably, less than 1% of annual average protected acres burned. This ratio of moderate fire occurrence to very low protected acres burned continued to distinguish 2023 as a season of exemplary success in initial attack (IA). ODF's comprehensive approach using early detection, aggressive IA, expedient use of aircraft, and fostering landowner partnerships, are the primary pillars for success in keeping fires small and costs down.

Fuel moisture at the beginning of June was already approaching minimums in Districts such as ODF West Oregon (WO), South Cascades (SCAS), and North Cascades (NCAS),

and fire danger indices were pulsing above average. ODF started to see an uptick in western Oregon fire activity. The Reuben Leigh fire burned 41 protected acres in WO, the Marmot Road fire burned 19 protected acres in NCAS, and Douglas Forest Protective Association (DFPA) reported the Ferguson Lane and Thunder Mountain fires at 13 and 11 protected acres burned respectively. Mid-June thunderstorms brought temporary relief with cooler temperatures but trace precipitation in most areas except south-central and northeast Oregon.

On the July 4th holiday weekend, a heat event with winds and low humidity was signaled by red flag warnings for the Willamette Valley, the Coast Range nearly all the way to the ocean shore, and the western Cascades foothills. The northwest half of Oregon was expecting above normal significant wildland fire potential. By now, persistent offshore high pressure had dominated the region and fire danger indices exceeded extreme thresholds, notably in western Oregon ODF Districts like Western Lane.

The Boulder fire started on July 8 near a trailhead on the Mt. Hood National Forest and burned 233 acres. The Flat Fire started July 15 near Oak Flat Campground in the Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest and the town of Agness. It grew to be Oregon's largest this season at 34,242 acres. The Bedrock fire started July 22 from Bedrock Campground in USFS Willamette National Forest lands and burned 31,590 acres. Just to the northeast of the Bedrock fire, the lightning-caused Lookout fire burned an additional 25,751 acres in Willamette NF. These fires were monitored closely by ODF in NCAS and The Dalles (Boulder fire), and SCAS (Bedrock and Lookout fires), and Coos Forest Protective Association (Flat fire). Deputy Agency Administrators from ODF and the Associations represented the needs of the State of Oregon with multiple Interagency Incident Management Teams as well as provided suppression resources.

On the east side, grass and brush fires started to appear in the landscape like the Alder Creek fire that burned 1,627 acres on BLM lands in central Oregon. ODF Northeast Oregon District (NEO) provided mutual aid to several fires including Bensel Road at 645 acres, the North Cayuse fire at 199 ac and the Tutuilla fire at 100 acres.

By mid-July, single digit humidity afflicted central and eastern Oregon from the Cascades east. In ODF NEO, the Grossman Fire burned 153 protected acres and the Jones Butte fire burned 115 protected acres. On July 14th, critical fire weather conditions

with fire weather watches for winds, low humidity and heat advisories bore down on the Willamette Valley and all lands in Oregon except the higher elevation mountains, all the way south and east into the Klamath and Harney basins.

On July 22 the Golden Fire in ODF Klamath-Lake District required ODF Incident Management Team (IMT) mobilization and a FEMA Fire Management Assistance Grant (FMAG) declaration. Fire behavior was extreme, with group trees torching and crown runs contributing to spotting ahead of the main fire. 100 residences were threatened, 48 were destroyed, 250 people were evacuated, and a major fiber optic cable serving Lake County was damaged. This fire burned 2,137 total acres.

By August, the region was bracing for inevitable thunderstorms from the North American Monsoon known to bring lightning, albeit with some moisture relief in late summer to the interior west and points north. However, the monsoon rains were forecasted to be below average this season. ODF has experienced many fire seasons with dry lightning events that trigger hundreds of ignitions simultaneously. Fire managers utilize reconnaissance flights, the smoke detection camera system and now the ODF Multi-Mission Aircraft and prepare initial attack resources for this potential to respond as quickly as possible to keep any fires detected small.

While ODF monitored for incoming storms, on August 4th at 3:22pm ODF SCAS Sweet Home Unit resources were dispatched to a large fire located near Priceboro Road in the foothills of the Coburg Mountains in Linn County. The fire was spreading south due to a strong wind blowing towards the Mt Tom community which is accessed from a one lane road in Lane County. Mt Tom has only one road in and out. There are over 60 homes in the neighborhood.

The fire size was about 25 acres by 4:00pm. Air resources were ordered prior to the first ODF engine being on scene based off of reports of the smoke column. Harrisburg Fire department responded as well as other neighboring rural fire districts. Oregon State Fire Marshal provided structural resources which were mostly committed to the Mt. Tom community. The Linn County Sheriff ordered evacuations near the fire area. Additional helicopters and fixed wing aircraft were ordered for the fire. Two ODF dozers and Incident Resource Agreement (IRA) industrial resources responded to the fire as well.

Crews worked to line the fire all night. Just a few hours into this fire the district asked neighboring districts and ODF Southern Oregon Area (SOA) administration for additional resources. By the morning of the 5th at 8:00am there were aerial and ground resources beating on the fire. The fire continued to be pushed by the wind and spread rapidly in very dry fuels. By the evening of the 5th the fire was stopped ¼ mile from the Mt. Tom community. The final fire size was 309.5 acres. This was a textbook ODF initial attack. All SOA districts and neighboring districts pitched in to support SCAS to keep this fire contained as small and as quickly as possible.

On August 20th, 2023, the Juniper Creek fire ignited on protected lands of ODF Central Oregon District (COD) Prineville/Sisters unit. The Lake Chinook Fire Chief alerted ODF of a fire in the Geneva area, requesting immediate assistance.

The Prineville/Sisters unit is dispatched out of the Central Oregon Interagency Dispatch Center (COIDC) and relies on a network of mountaintop radio repeaters for communications in initial fire response. These repeaters are used not only by wildland agencies but also by various structural fire departments in the region. Each geographical area follows a pre-established mutual aid radio plan for coordinated initial attack responses to wildfires involving multiple jurisdictions.

The Geneva area, situated approximately 15 miles north of Sisters, is notorious for its frequent, large, fast-moving fires, often hampered by challenging accessibility. Notable past fires in the area that required Incident Management Team deployments include Akawana, Graham Road, and Grandview, along with several Type 3 fire team deployments over the years.

Upon being informed of the fire, ODF mobilized 2 ODF engines and viewed the Pine Tel smoke detection camera, one of many lookout cameras in the district, which revealed a substantial column of smoke, barely visible on the camera. During this time, Central Oregon was grappling with dense smoke from various statewide fires. ODF immediately called for Air Attack, deploying Single Engine Air Tanker (SEAT) planes from Prineville, and requested additional resources. ODF COD had a strike team of move-up engines from the NW Oregon region touring COIDC when the fire started. This strike team was diverted to the fire.

The fire size was assessed at approximately 20 acres, with torching and spotting. ODF directed engines to secure the fire's heel and ordered a second alarm, which triggered a

predetermined allocation of resources as outlined in the dispatch cards. Additionally, ODF requested two additional dozers. Due to the heavy smoke in the vicinity, SEATs struggled to make their initial drops and had to return to base due to perilous flying conditions. Consequently, ODF ordered two helicopters, the only air assets capable of operating under the prevailing conditions, which played a critical role in slowing the fire when no other air resources could be deployed.

The fire was estimated at this point to be at 40+ acres and spreading rapidly. Given the resources on the scene, ODF aggressively pursued direct attack strategies on the fire's flanks until the dozers arrived to create a firebreak, enhancing safety for firefighting personnel. Recognizing the area's fire history and the limited air support due to smoke, ODF initiated the activation of the Central Oregon Fire Management Service (COFMS) Type 3 team, anticipating the fire to develop into extended attack. The Incident Commander swiftly organized divisions on the left and right flanks of the fire, assigning engine bosses to oversee each until the Type 3 team's leadership arrived and could assume the roles. As the dozers arrived, they were immediately put to work on both sides of the fire. The firefighting operation involved a continuous direct attack, employing engine crews, hose lays, helicopters, dozers, and burnout strategies until containment was achieved, halting the fire's growth at 106 acres before transferring command to the Type 3 team.

Effective mutual aid assistance from multiple agencies, including ODF, USFS, BLM, Lake Chinook Fire, Lower Bridge Rangeland Protective Association (RPA), COIDC, severity aircraft, local IRA's, and landowners, was instrumental in containing the fire. The firefighting teams faced numerous challenges, including prolonged hot and dry weather, extreme fire danger conditions, heavy smoke hindering air operations, difficult access, the presence of light, flammable fuels, and wind patterns that made fire containment a formidable task. Considering recent and historical fires in the area, containing the fire at its 106-acre final size was a significant achievement. Overall, the rapid and prudent decisions made by ODF personnel under challenging circumstances prevented the fire from growing further, averting damage to landowner properties and mitigating risks to additional resources, all while minimizing costs.

A few days later, on Aug 24-25, over 1,000 strikes of lightning lit up Oregon. Except for northeast Oregon, moisture from the thunderstorms was mainly scattered and light. And this season, in an unusually dry landscape inundated by low humidity, heat waves, and winds, the lightning storms produced over 100 fire ignitions in western

Oregon, including the Smith River Complex in northern California with its Kelly Fire that burned about 12,529 acres across the state line.

Response to this outbreak of fires is another striking testament to ODF initial attack success: nearly every ignition on ODF-protected lands from this event was extinguished upon discovery and only one complex of fires grew to require an ODF IMT during this event. Other large fires were on other agency lands and several of these fires from this event are still burning as of this report.

ODF West Oregon District (WO) protects just over a million acres, and the typical fire load only requires 10 engines to provide an adequate level of protection. However, this lightning storm event created a situation that was anything but typical for the district. District staff responded to 11 fires in a single day, and this was in a district that typically responds to 1 fire per day on average. Response required IA resources that far exceeded what was available. The strength of the complete and coordinated fire protection system was activated when local landowner partners engaged on 7 of those 11 fires and the Bureau of Land Management also brought resources to help in the fight.

ODF IMT 1 was mobilized to the lightning caused Tyee Ridge Complex burning 18 individual fires on private and BLM lands within DFPA in Douglas County. Heavy downed fuels on steep slopes were burning actively and intensely with spotting and torching. 147 residences were threatened and 183 people were evacuated. The fire burned 8,303 total acres. This complex was a relatively long duration fire for ODF, and ODF IMT 3 relieved IMT 1 until the fire could be safely transferred back to DFPA after 25 days.

The 46-acre Liberty Road fire ignited in a grassy area amongst homes just south of Salem on Aug 24 as well. The cause of this fire is still under investigation by the Salem Fire Department. OSFM requested air attack and a helicopter through ODF, and local structural firefighters were on scene immediately upon discovery of this fire which forced 630 households to evacuate within a half-hour necessitating an FMAG declaration.

Umpqua National Forest on the western slopes of the Cascades, had several lightning fires from this event, some of which are still active, including the Chilcoot at 1,940 acres,

Horse Creek at 763 acres, Brice Creek at 571 acres, Grizzly at 324 acres, Dinner at 304 acres, and the Ridge fire at 214 acres. The Petes Lake Fire straddling the Willamette and Deschutes National Forest boundary grew to 3,086 ac. The Camp Creek Fire burned 2,055 acres in Portland's Bull Run Watershed in Mt. Hood National Forest east of Portland. The Anvil fire burned 22,170 acres to date in the Grassy Knob Wilderness of the Rogue River-Siskiyou NF near Port Orford at the coast. Central Oregon heated back up in terms of fire activity as well with the 2,370-acre Cottonwood Fire and the 1,500-acre Trout Creek fire on BLM lands.

In late August temporary relief came in the form of a season slowing event with wetting rains and a cooling onshore flow from the Pacific Ocean. A brief warm and dry period returned with two new fires on USFS and USFWS lands in the Klamath area, the Morgan Fire at 2,289 acres and the Marsh Fire at 2,663 acres. During this time, the passage of a warm thermal trough through the region allowed the Anvil Fire at the coast to grow over 7,500 acres in 4 days. But in the last week of September a season ending rain event occurred along and west of the Cascades from northwest California through western Washington. Most of the Coast Range received 2-4 inches of rain in a 72-hour period. Coastal southwest Oregon and area fires received 2.5 to nearly 5.5 inches of rain. All of the existing large fires west of the Cascades received substantial rainfall, significantly reducing fire behavior and future spread potential. This caused a major step down in fire activity and reduced the forecasted above normal significant fire potential for western Oregon back to normal for October.

Fire Season 2023 By the Numbers

As of Oct. 2, 2023, there have been 967 fires on ODF-protected lands. This is 100% of the 10-year average of 962 fires. Acres burned are at 16,975, which is 14% of the 10-year average of 119,424 acres. Human-caused fires accounted for 773 of this year's total fires, and 6,625 acres burned. This is up from the 10-year average of 695 human-caused fires, but only 10% of the 10-year average of 68,779 acres burned. There were 194 lightning fires this year, which is 73% of the 10-year average of 267, and 10,350 acres burned, which is 20% of the 10-year average of 51,076 acres burned. ODF responded to 267 non-statistical fires managed by other agencies that burned 4,298 protected acres, and 1,969 non-fire crew actions. These NFCAs represent a response to calls that did not turn into statistical fires and can become significant patrol workloads for personnel.

ODF's Multi-Mission Aircraft with night vision and infrared technology tallied 80 flight hours, 30 primary fire detections, 7 secondary detections, and 3 live-stream operational support missions.

Across all jurisdictions in Oregon to date, preliminary estimates show 1,784 fires have burned 188,726 acres. ODF's contribution is 54% of the statewide fires but only 9% of the total statewide acres burned.

This fire season, the Oregon/Washington geographic area Preparedness Level (PL) had a longer early PL 1 for 33 days with a steady and evenly distributed ramp up of PL 2 through 4. but the pulsing hot and cool conditions oscillated the PL between 4 and 5 during late August and early September. PL stepped down uniformly in September and remains at PL 2 as of this report.

Fire Season Estimated Costs

The department spends a significant amount of its biennial funding on suppression efforts to protect natural resources, communities, and Oregonians during the fire season. Experience has shown us the importance of a diverse fire funding system to respond to seasons like this one. The system created over time—with the support of landowners, the Legislature, and the Governor's Office—involves shared responsibility among landowners and the state's General Fund.

The estimated gross fire costs for the 2023 season are \$73,843,331. Net fire costs are currently estimated at \$35,204,561. The state's total share of the estimated net fire costs is \$23,995,017 and will be part of the department's General Fund request at the 2024 Legislative session.

Estimated Increase in Other Funds Limitation

As a result of covering the gross costs of the 2023 fire season, the department is projected to exceed its Other Funds (OF) limitation. To ensure that funding is available to continue all department operations, the department will be requesting an additional \$47,847,177 in OF limitation at the 2024 Legislative session.

Special Purpose Appropriation Severity Program

The department's severity program—funded through a special purpose appropriation (SPA)—maintains a pool of additional resources available for statewide use when fire conditions are most severe. At the conclusion of each fire season, the department requests reimbursement for severity costs from the SPA through the Emergency Board.

This fire season, the department contracted for one large air tanker, one large helicopter, five medium helicopters, one small helicopter, seven single-engine airtankers, two water-scooping airtankers, two detection planes and several ground-based resources. The statewide severity program resources are in addition to district aviation resources already positioned throughout the state. Additional aviation and ground resources were added to the pool during periods of very high fire danger and increased fire activity. There were also call-when-needed contracts and local resource agreements to augment the exclusive-use contracts.

The resources provided through the severity program are critical to keeping fires as small as possible. In 2023, 95 percent of fires that started on ODF-protected lands were kept to 10 acres or less. Severity aircraft flew a total of 1,218 hours on incidents and delivered approximately 1,907,474 gallons of water, gel and long-term retardant to wildfires across the state. A breakdown of flight time by resource type is provided below:

- Single-engine airtankers and water-scooping airtankers: 519 hours
- Large airtanker: 62 hours
- Helicopters (small and medium): 342 hours
- Helicopter (large): 102 hours
- Detection planes: 193 hours

The estimated net severity fire costs for the 2023 season are \$9,025,681. This will be part of the department's request to release funds in the Special Purpose Appropriation (SPA) allocated to the Emergency Board at the 2024 Legislative session.

Fire Prevention

While human-caused fires are currently in-line with year-to-date averages, a spike started to occur in May, before fire season went into effect, and continued each month

throughout fire season. July was the hardest hit month showing an increase of 51 fires over the average. Activity moderated to some degree in September keeping in line with the 10-year average of just over 110 human-caused fires for the month.

Much of the state was experiencing extreme fire danger from July 20th through September 1st. And even though fire prone activities, such as campfires, mowing dry grass, small equipment use and off-road driving were prohibited on ODF protected lands during this period, 259 human-caused fires still occurred. Specific fire causes ranged from campfires to vehicles to debris burning, with debris burning accounting for the lion's share. It is worth noting here that debris burning is prohibited under ODF protection from the start of fire season in June, regardless of fire danger. ODF is leading the charge to reduce debris burning fires by creating a statewide web-based application to connect with the public on burning restrictions and practices, regardless of jurisdiction.

Connecting with and educating the public and those working outdoors is priority number one for ODF and our partners in our efforts to prevent human-caused wildfires. We do this by messaging and sharing partner messages through social media, working with traditional media (tv, radio, newspaper) during periods of elevated fire danger, and marketing key messages through advertising leading into and throughout fire season.

One messaging campaign occurs each summer through our partnership with the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT). As needed during periods of extreme fire danger, ODF messaged tens of thousands of motorists through ODOT's statewide electronic reader board system to exercise caution.

HB2501 Preliminary Report on Losses on Private Lands

The department is required to report on wildfires more than 1,000 acres regarding the losses on private lands of timber, buildings, fencing and livestock, and of grazing land capacity if the land is expected to be unavailable for two or more grazing seasons (ORS 477.777). During the 2023 fire season, four fires met this reporting criteria. This preliminary loss assessment report is consistent with the expectation of law but limited by the time, capacity, and expertise required to conduct a fair and comprehensive assessment of loss relative to what the state has experienced.

The Golden fire impacted 2,137 acres of public and private forestland and destroyed 48 inhabited structures, and 69 additional outbuildings. The total damage of this wildfire is estimated at \$10.9 million.

The Cougar Creek fire, part of the Tyee Ridge Complex, burned 6,484 acres of public and privately-owned timberlands. The total damage of this wildfire is estimated at \$9.9 million.

The Lighthouse #3 fire, part of the Tyee Ridge Complex burned 1,104 acres of timber of public and privately-owned timberlands. The total damage of this wildfire is estimated at \$1.7 million.

The Kelly fire, part of the Smith River Complex, burned 1,440 acres of public and privately-owned timberlands. The total damage of this wildfire is estimated at \$2.2 million.

Action Requested

ODF respectfully requests that the Joint Committee on Ways and Means

1. Acknowledge and accept ODF's final report and estimated costs on the 2023 fire season in Oregon.
2. Acknowledge and accept the preliminary report of losses on private lands of timber, buildings, fencing, livestock, and grazing land capacity if the land is expected to be unavailable for two or more grazing seasons required by HB2501.

Legislation Affected

None

Sincerely,



Cal Mukumoto
State Forester

c: Legislative Fiscal Office
Chief Financial Office
Board of Forestry
Governor's Office