

ANALYSIS

Item 33: Department of Forestry Wildfire Funding Workgroup Facilitation

Analyst: April McDonald

Request: Allocate \$157,500 General Fund from the Emergency Fund to the Department of Forestry to procure a facilitator for a workgroup on wildfire funding strategies.

Analysis: The budget report for SB 5701 (2024) included a budget note directing the Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) and the Department of the State Fire Marshal (DSFM) to convene a workgroup to identify options for sustainably funding wildfire mitigation, suppression and mobilizations, land classification, and managing the intersection between forest land protection districts and structural fire protection districts. The agencies were further directed to contract with a third-party to continue facilitated conversations to explore wildfire funding strategies within the context of the state's public finance strategy, as recommended in the November 2019 report from the Governor's Council on Wildfire Response. The request for \$157,500 General Fund is to pay for the third-party facilitator contract.

The workgroup is to include a wide breadth of participation represented by landowners, local fire agencies, Oregon Tribes, conservation groups, agency partners, impacted industries, and more. The workgroup is charged with developing a detailed report of alternative funding strategies which considers and discusses potential barriers to implementation, sustainability risks, and fiscal impacts. The intent of the third-party facilitator is to bring in an experienced, neutral, moderator with no affiliation to workgroup members to foster productive conversation among the diverse membership and assist the progress toward a deliverable. ODF and DSFM shall jointly report on the workgroup's progress to the December 2024 meeting of the Emergency Board and to the Joint Committee on Ways and Means during the 2025 legislative session.

Recommendation: The Legislative Fiscal Office recommends that the Emergency Board allocate \$157,500 General Fund from the Emergency Fund to the Department of Forestry to procure a facilitator for a workgroup on wildfire funding strategies.

Request: Allocate \$157,500 from the State Emergency Fund to convene a workgroup tasked with identifying options for sustainably funding wildfire mitigation.

Recommendation: Approve the request.

Discussion: Throughout the 2023-25 biennium, legislative members and staff convened a workgroup with identified stakeholders and executive branch agency staff to identify options for sustainable funding of wildfire mitigation. The workgroup held 10 meetings between the end of the 2023 Legislative Session and the commencement of the 2024 Legislative Session, which culminated in the draft of Senate Bill 4133 (2024). Ultimately, Senate Bill 4133 did not pass the 2024 Legislative Session.

To memorialize its continued resolve, the Legislature included a budget note in Senate Bill 5701 (2024), which directed the Department, in conjunction with the Oregon State Fire Marshal, to “identify options for sustainably funding wildfire mitigation, suppression and mobilizations, land classification, and managing the intersection between forest land protection districts and structural fire protection districts.” The budget note also requires the Department to procure a third-party contractor to facilitate the workgroup. However, Senate Bill 5701 did not provide the Department with funding to procure a third-party contractor. The Department is now seeking funding to support contract with a third-party contractor to complete the work directed by the budget note.

Legal Reference: Allocation of \$157,500 from the State Emergency Fund to supplement the appropriation made by Chapter 453, section 1(1), Oregon Laws 2023, for the Oregon Department of Forestry, Fire Protection, for the 2023-25 biennium.



Oregon

Tina Kotek, Governor

Department of Forestry
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April 29, 2024

Senator Rob Wagner, Co-Chair
Representative Julie Fahey, Co-Chair
State Emergency Board
900 Court Street NE
H-178 State Capitol
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Oregon Department of Forestry – General Fund Request for Facilitation Services

Dear Co-Chairs:

Nature of the Request

The Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) respectfully requests an increase of \$157,500 of General Fund to procure a third-party contractor to continue facilitated conversations to explore wildfire funding strategies within the context of Oregon's overall public finance strategy, as recommended in the November 2019 Governor's Council on Wildfire Response Report and Recommendations

Agency Action

The Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) and the Department of the State Fire Marshal (DSFM) are directed in a budget note from the 2024 Legislative Session (SB 5701) to work in partnership to convene a workgroup to identify options for sustainably funding wildfire mitigation, suppression and mobilizations, land classification, and managing the intersection between forest land protection districts and structural fire protection districts. The workgroup shall include a wide range of stakeholders representing landowners, local fire agencies, Oregon Tribes, conservation groups, agency partners, and impacted industries. Additionally, the workgroup shall regularly engage with the Wildfire Programs Advisory Council.

Through these facilitated conversations, ODF and DSFM shall jointly present a report on the workgroup's progress to the December 2024 meeting of the Emergency Board and to the Joint Committee on Ways and Means during the 2025 legislative session.

Action Requested

ODF respectfully requests an increase of \$157,500 from the General Fund to procure a third-party contractor to continue facilitated conversations to explore wildfire funding strategies within Oregon.

Legislation Affected

HB 5020, Chapter 453, Section 1(1), Oregon Laws 2023

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Cal Mukumoto", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Cal Mukumoto
State Forester

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