



**Written testimony on behalf of Alexi Lovechio, Klamath-Siskiyou Wildlands Center
Senate Committee on Natural Resources
Public Hearing: Senate Bills 82 and 509
Monday, February 6, 2023
8:00am**

Chairman Golden, Vice-Chair Giford, and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of Senate Bills (SB) 82 and 509. These bills include important measures to update and improve the statewide wildfire risk map and support communities in preparing for wildfire.

My name is Alexi Lovechio and I am the Forest & Climate Coordinator for the Klamath-Siskiyou Wildlands Center (KS Wild) in Ashland, Oregon. We are a nonprofit conservation advocacy organization with over 10,000 members and supporters, many of which live in the fire-prone Siskiyou and South Cascade Mountain Ranges. Our organization has expertise in forest conservation, fire ecology, climate adaptation, and community fire preparation. We are a part of community and collaborative efforts to advance climate smart forest conservation and community fire protection efforts throughout southern Oregon and northern California.

Oregon is experiencing increased occurrence and severity of wildfire as a result of many factors, including climate change. Wildfires have struck our region repeatedly, most devastating was the 2020 Almeda fire that destroyed lives and homes in Rogue Valley communities surrounding and within Talent and Phoenix. The State of Oregon passed a sweeping wildfire package focused on policy solutions for wildfire through SB 762 in 2021. We are writing to support Senate Bills 82 and 509 which represent important evolutions and refinements to SB 762.

KS Wild supports SB 82 as it clearly protects landowners by prohibiting insurance companies to use the statewide wildfire risk map as a basis for canceling policy or increasing premium. We support risk mapping so that resources can be applied to protecting homes and communities in wildfire prone areas of the state. However, as you are well aware, there was overwhelming pushback from Oregonians on the original wildfire risk map created in June 2022, due to concerns that insurance companies were using the map to establish rates or cancel policies. SB 82 provides protection for landowners and is a clear response to community concerns.

KS Wild supports SB 509 with -1 amendments and the creation of a community risk reduction program. One of the most important aspects of community fire safety is working from the home out and creating defensible space. SB 509 establishes grant programs to incentivize landowners and other community members to support implementation of defensible space, home hardening, and other fuels reduction treatments. These practices mitigate wildfire risk and reduce a home's susceptibility to future wildfires. We also support the creation of the risk reduction program because it emphasizes education and the creation of resources, including a user-friendly website, to support landowners and other community members in wildfire mitigation practices. In our experience there is a great need to work with communities to ensure that resources make it those areas in most need of defensible space.

Senate Bills 82 and 509 represent important next steps in implementing Oregon's wildfire policy package, SB 762. These are essential pieces of legislation to help prepare our communities for wildfire in the era of climate change.

KS Wild strongly supports SB 82 and 509 and urges the Committee to report out this legislation. Community preparedness, defensible space, and wildfire education are important strategies to meaningfully protect our communities and landscapes throughout Oregon.

Sincerely,
Alexi Lovechio
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