

The Honorable Senator Michael Dembrow  
Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources  
State Capitol  
Salem, OR 97310

March 2, 2023

Thank you, Chair Dembrow, members of the committee, my name is Brennan Garrelts and I represent Oregon forestland owners as both *President of the Board of Directors of Douglas Forest Protective Association* and *Chair of ODF's Emergency Fire Cost Committee* which oversees the Oregon Forest Land Protection Fund. I am providing testimony and information, from the prospective of Oregon landowners, in regards to fire protection costs and rates associated with HB 5020.

I encourage you to proceed carefully and thoughtfully as you consider ODF's fire protection budget and the impacts of increased protection rates that both rural, small landowners and large landowners alike will pay. Even without legislative cost shift, forestland owners are seeing rates increase due to inflationary pressure, and the need for increased staffing required to address increasing wildfire activities.

Historically, Oregon's fire-fighting cost structure was established for rural Oregon landowners to pay for what was then a rural problem. But in the past 20 years, wildfire has become an all-Oregon problem, with each summer's wildfire causing medical issues, disrupting regional economies, and having devastating impacts to the ecosystem services Oregon's forestlands provide to *all* Oregon citizens.

The historic passing of Senate Bill 762 was a legislative recognition that Oregon's wildfire is a *statewide* problem deserving of statewide policy and investment solutions. Yet, today as a result of not continuing the General fund offset for 762 capacity, landowner rates will increase a minimum 10-40% statewide (location depending). A good example of this cost shift is ODF's Salem Fire program budget, which increased 55%. These are not on-the-ground resources supporting direct wildfire suppression in rural communities. These are bureaucrats – and I mean that in the most respectful way possible – working to find all Oregonian solutions to wildfire. Should landowners be the ones to pay for this?

Every landowner's situation is different. As ODF stated in their testimony, the ~14 million acres of protected private property covers a broad spectrum of ownership types and situations. I can attest that State Forester Mukumoto got it right in his testimony, fire protection rates in many cases are severely stressing the landowner's ability to keep their forest acres financially solvent over the lifespan of seedling to harvest. This is a direct risk to keeping Oregon's forestland as forest, as well as keeping Oregon small landowners as the owner, rather than out of state institutional investors which have the luxury of amortizing our state's costs over acres owned outside of the state.

I urge you to be careful; continued cost increases to both rural, forestland owning residents, as well as large timberland owners is threatening the continued success of Oregon's nationally regarded Complete and Coordinated System as one-by-one Oregon forestland owners reach their breaking point of covering the increasing cost of wildfire on their backs for *all* Oregonians. Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

Thank you,



Brennan Garrelts  
President, Board of Directors of DFPA  
Chair, ODF Emergency Fire Cost Committee