



# Associated Oregon Loggers, Inc.

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**Date:** March 2, 2023

**To:** The Honorable Michael Dembrow & Khanh Pham, Co-Chairs  
Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Natural Resources  
Oregon State Capitol  
Salem, OR 97301

**Subject:** HB 5020 - **Neutral**

*Co-Chairs Dembrow & Pham and Committee Members:*

Associated Oregon Loggers (AOL) is the statewide trade association and voice of Oregon's firefighters, loggers, restoration contractors, reforestation companies and other forest operators. The nearly 22,000 small businesses that AOL represents rely on a fully functioning Department of Forestry to achieve their work every day.

AOL works with the Department on many topics and in many ways including, but not limited to:

- Professional Operator Training Through a Memorandum of Agreement for the Oregon Professional Logger Program
- Industrial Fire Prevention Rule Review
- Certified Burn Manager Program
- State Forest Advisory Committee
- Committee for Family Forestlands
- Adaptive Management Program
- Compliance Monitoring Program
- 20-Year Strategic Landscape Resiliency Plan Development
- Forestry Program for Oregon
- Natural and Working Lands Policy and Climate Smart Forestry Practices

## **Oregon's Complete and Coordinated Firefighting System**

Our members are also a critical part of Oregon's complete and coordinated firefighting system. This video easily explains this system and the impact Oregon's loggers and other forest operators have within it: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZnzMrumXiR4>



Firefighters are not just 20-person handcrews, hotshots and smokejumpers. They are also loggers, ranchers, road builders and much more.

Forest contractors are being enlisted by public firefighting agencies to help stop the blazes across the state. In fact, the Oregon Department of Forestry and their federal partners rely heavily on the skilled labor that loggers and other contracted service people provide during fire season.



The work completed by these skilled individuals outside of fire season to reduce fuels, restore landscapes, maintain forest access and deliver green building materials aids in the state's ability to successfully extinguish fires and provides natural climate change solutions. Accelerating the pace and scale of proactive forest management also provides the year-round work necessary to sustain small logging businesses and other forest contractors.

Forest management and fuels reduction is a win-win for Oregon. Any trained forester will tell you that profitable and sustainable timber harvesting generates more funding to improve forest health and provide additional opportunities for non-commercial fuel reduction. But there have been questions about whether or not forest thinning and fuel reduction activities actually reduce fire behavior, such that fires are less intense, less severe, and less impactful in dry, frequent-fire forests.

The complete and coordinated system doesn't end after the fires are out. The partnerships and complex supply chains that allow wildfires to be aggressively fought, access to be maintained and carbon storing wood products to continually be supplied to the market does not happen by chance. Loggers and other forest contractors are proud to be a part of the firefighting team, but they need your-round work to keep their businesses viable.

Forest contractors are the firefighters you depend on during fire season and the professional stewards that provide Oregonians with healthy forests and carbon storing wood products. Let's ensure these critical firefighting assets remain available for whatever nature throws their way by supporting loggers, being critical of overregulation and preservation mentalities and acknowledging the work they do within and outside of fire season to maintain vibrant communities and provide all Oregonians with vital wood products.

### **Workforce Development**

To help address these workforce challenges, during the budget development process for ODF, AOL approached the Department about ways they could help. The State Forester and





Chair of the Board of Forestry were excited to see how the Department could engage and partner on this critical issue.

We were able to advance a new FTE for workforce development through the Planning Branch Policy Option Package, POP 104. This “Workforce Development Coordinator” is critical to advance through the budget process and would only cost the General Fund approximately \$272,125 total for the biennium (OPA-3). Getting the hearing authority for this position would add necessary capacity at the Department to have expertise in the development of grant proposals, to broaden relationships with other agencies

(Employment, Education, HECC, Corrections, and more), and to give small businesses in the state the support they need to achieve the goals outlined in the Department’s guiding statutes.

### **Landscape Resiliency and Federal Forest Restoration**

Another way the Legislature can help to grow the small businesses working in the woods is through fully funding the Forest Resources Division’s efforts on landscape resiliency while also increasing funding through the support of the SB 762 – Continuing Investments (POP 107) and Federal Forest Restoration (FFR) Program Infrastructure Investment (POP 108) Policy Option Packages.

POP 107 would help with continuity of investments previously made in SB 762 from the 2021 Legislative Session which has resulted in increased work opportunities for AOL’s small business members while POP 108 grows ODF’s FFR program through capitalizing on investments from Congress to bring additional capacity to the state through federal dollars to work on restoration of critically overstocked federal stands in Oregon.



Ultimately, the Department must maximize effectiveness of forest health treatments at a pace and scale commensurate with the risks we face. The way this is achieved is through leveraging value from forest resiliency treatments and plowing it back into restoration work and creating additional resilient landscapes. This occurs by reducing fuel in the woods that can be used to create clean infrastructure while creating new markets from low value material to start doing things like using wood instead of petroleum to produce energy, fuel and gasoline in our state. The value we receive from these markets can then be used for grants, other restoration work, prescribed fire and more.

AOL believes an expanded FFR Program focused on landscape resiliency is critical to grow because of the social license it is able to create through collaborative efforts, the scale of forest health treatments it is able to achieve through implementing the Good Neighbor Authority (GNA) and the pace of management it is able to realize by working with partners across the state.

By and Large, AOL believes it is GNA that is truly unrivaled to any other mechanism at the departments disposal to help address the climate, wildfire and overall forest health crisis in this state without being a drain on the General Fund, but we are willing to support other programs that also make a difference.

Both POP 107 and d108 would be good investments for the Legislature to prioritize for the betterment of the forest condition across the state for all Oregonians.

### **Adaptive Management**

We would also like to see the Adaptive Management Program outlined in the Private Forest Accord and SB 1501 be fully funded. The Governor's Recommended Budget did not fully fund this program, yet it is a cornerstone of the Private Forest Accord and the future of forest policy in the state.

The goals of the program, as outlined in the Private Forest Accord Report, are to, "provide science-based recommendations and technical information to assist the Board in determining if and when it is necessary or advisable to adjust rules, guidance, and training programs to achieve resource goals and objectives identified in the Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP)" (PFA Report, pg. 132).

### **Conclusion**

For these reasons AOL urges you to amend the ODF Budget to advance the additional positions and POPs outlined in our testimony.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on our views of HB 5020 and I am happy to work with the committee and other legislators on ways to advance the additional investments we have outlined here today.

Graciously,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Amanda Sullivan-Astor', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

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