



Southern Willamette Forest Collaborative
"Coming together for healthy forests and communities"

March 2nd, 2023

TO: Representative Khanh Pham and Michael Dembrow, Co-chairs of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources

FROM: Southern Willamette Forest Collaborative

SUBJECT: Extend adequate funding to sustain SB 762 fuels reduction programs (LRP and SFGP) and the ODF Federal Forest Restoration Program through HB 5020

Dear co-chairs Pham and Dunbrow,

The Southern Willamette Forest Collaborative (SWFC) is writing to express our strong support for funding to sustain the ODF Landscape Resiliency Program and the Small Forestland Grant Program, at \$20 million and \$5 million. In addition, SWFC supports full extension of funding to the Federal Forest Restoration program. These investments have been critical to the health of our private and federal forests while reducing fire risk to our communities. SWFC work with ODF on fuels reduction and forest restoration show tangible results that prove the worth of these programs. Through collaboration, we have used these programs to increase the pace and scale of restoration while improving life safety.

The SWFC brings environmentalists, timber industry representatives, local government, state and federal land management agencies, and community members together to find agreement on forest management. Collaboration has led to the development of new projects that meet multiple ecological, economic, and fire hazard mitigation objectives.

Landscape Resiliency Program and Small Forestland Grants Program

The LRP and SFGP, both authorized and funded by SB 762, have been of significant benefit to the Oakridge-Westfir area. Grant funding received under LRP and SFGP has hired local contractors to implement strategic and ecologically informed fire hazard reduction. SWFC coordination with ODF, OSFM, OSU, USFS, Lane County, local fire agencies, and a host of others to plan and implement these projects through the fire safe council. In the inevitable case of a wildfire, the work has made crucial roads more defensible and helped homeowners to create defensible space. This need was made especially clear by last year's Cedar Creek fire, which burned nearly 130,000 acres and came within 5 miles of city limits. If the fire had come much closer, the town would have been at major risk of catastrophic damage to life and property. While our work so far has improved the town's chances when fire breaks out, it is a down payment on the true fire mitigation need in our area.

Like the surrounding Willamette National Forest, private lands in and around Oakridge-Westfir (and in many places across the state) are in dire need of targeted fuels reduction. The most economical and effective way to reduce risk to residents is to use strategic treatments informed

by science and local knowledge, at tactically sound areas. Most of our work has been understory brush and invasive species, leaving canopies that will shade out hazardous brush from rapid regrowth. On the west side of the Cascades, this work is often done on difficult terrain, in thick forests, during inclement weather, and all of this can drive up costs significantly per acre compared to eastside fuels reduction. Without continued funding for implementation and capacity, the work we've accomplished will not reach the full potential to reduce risk to homes in the community.

The Federal Forest Restoration Program

In the 2020-2022 budget, the legislature invested \$5 million in FFR. In this biennium we have the opportunity to build upon these successes by incorporating Good Neighbor Authority (GNA). The GNA program on the Willamette National Forest conducted timber sales and updated monitoring data that will make future planning more efficient. In 2022, the SWFC received Federal Forest Health Collaborative Technical Assistance for collaborative capacity to develop and maintain zones of agreement. Diverse stakeholders have participated in planning and implementation learning sessions, fieldtrips and roundtable discussions to recommend areas of agreement for restoration treatments, local workforce areas and priority restoration investments across the watershed. The projects combine thinning, stream restoration, road work and biomass removal. Together, the stewardship sales and GNA keep millions of dollars in the watershed to complete much needed restoration and provide local work.

We appreciate the Department of Forestry's implementation of the Federal Forest Restoration Program and strongly encourage you to continue support. Full funding for the FFR is integral to improving the health and resilience of our federal forest lands, creating and sustaining restoration and stewardship jobs in rural communities, protecting unique habitat, reducing wildfire risk to communities and restoring public lands for the benefit of all Oregonians.

On behalf of the SWFC steering committee and members, thank you for supporting this important program.

Respectfully,

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SWS Board of Directors/ SWFC Steering Committee

Sue Cathcart	Willamette Mt. Mercantile (Community member)
David Chamberlain	Professor, University of Oregon (Community member)
Jason Nehmer	Oakridge Disc Golf Club Founder (Community member)
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Craig Marcus	Professor, Oregon State University (Community member)
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