

Submitter: Judy Schultz
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Natural Resources and Wildfire
Measure, Appointment or SB1541
Topic:

Testify Make Polluters Pay

Good afternoon and thank you for taking the time to hear our testimony on this important legislation. I'm Judy Schultz and my husband and I live about 10 miles north of Sisters in beautiful Central Oregon. I grew up spending vacation time in the area and we always wanted to retire here. Our 40 acre property is our dream fulfilled. We started building with a garage/ADU and we moved in in December of 2024. We deliberately created a fire hardened structure with fire resistant materials, and we spent much of spring 2025 creating defensible space around our home. On the afternoon of Aug 21 2025 I was home alone with our 3 dogs and I started smelling smoke so I checked my WatchDuty app and saw the start of the Flat fire northeast of us with wind blowing straight at us. Although I was hoping it might be contained before reaching us, I decided to load our dogs, hook up our trailer with our go bags, and leave that evening. On the following evening the fire blew up to our ridge, took out two homes directly north of us, and burned through our 40 acres on its path toward Sisters. As we waited for work on the progress of the fire, we could tell that our garage was still there because the solar system app was still reporting power generated. Fire crews plus our defensible structures had been able to save our garage and fenced yard, but about half of our acreage was severely burned.

Ten days after the fire started we were cleared to return and while we were happy to find our belongings safe, the mourning for our neighbors' losses and for the damage to the land was heavy. Since the fire we have spent every possible day outside cleaning up the fallen juniper trees and burning slash, and trying to learn how to rehabilitate the land around us. We have been happy to see birds and deer returning to the property, rejoice at the greening of burned bunch grass, and hear the call of coyotes. But we will have to spend more time and money to control invasive weeds and reseed some native plants. I know that our neighbors have spent considerable of their resources on cleanup in various ways, as well.

The violence that humans do to their environment was never so clear to us. We all have responsibility for overuse of resources, particularly fossil fuels, but large corporations have contributed to and benefited most from production and use of climate changing oil and coal based technologies. Those who cause the damage should be responsible to help clean up the mess. Money gathered from these entities can help people like us prepare fire hardened living spaces, rehabilitate environmental damage and institute fire mitigation forest strategies, and contribute to the cost of fighting fires that do occur.

I urge you to support this legislation which will hold polluters responsible for the damage they have caused.

