

Agenda Item No.:	E
Title and # of Issue:	Vale and Jordon Valley Rangeland Protective Associations - Formation
Date of Presentation:	April 29, 2008
Contact:	Robert Young
Title:	Workforce Capacity & Policy Manager Fire Protection Division
Contact Information:	ryoung@odf.state.or.us

SUMMARY

The purpose of this agenda item is to obtain Board approval to proceed with formation of the Vale Rangeland Fire Protection Association in portions of northern Malheur County, and the Jordon Valley Rangeland Fire Protection Association, in portions of southern Malheur County.

CONTEXT

Rangeland fire protection associations are non-profit, locally governed groups of landowners which have been organized to provide fire protection to rangeland in portions of eastern Oregon. These organizations are formed under the authority of the Board and with assistance from the Department.

Letters from landowners in Southern and Northern Malheur County, dated February 26 and 28, 2007, requested the formation of rangeland fire protection associations. At its June 6, 2007 meeting, the Board authorized public hearings on the formation requests, pursuant to ORS 477.320. These hearings were held in Vale on January 14 and in Jordon Valley on January 15, 2008.

At the hearing, strong support for the formation of associations was evident and no opposition to a formation was expressed. Testimony presented during the hearing indicated a need for organized fire protection and revealed that landowners in the area have already taken initial organizational steps, including: a board of directors has been established and a person has been elected chair, a set of by-laws has been established, corporate legal status has been applied for, a bank account has been established, some funds have been raised, and commitments of time and equipment have been received.

Testimony presented at the hearing also revealed that landowners and residents of the area are increasingly worried about the incidence of rangeland fire. The past several years have produced numerous, very large, rangeland fires. Many attendees are life long residents that have fought fire for years, but because of federal restrictions are no longer able to assist in fire suppression on federal land. The belief is held, that with the formation of a Rangeland Fire Protection Association, additional equipment and formal training, the federal government will recognize them as firefighters. Then they will be able to support not only, private lands fire suppression, but assist on federal lands as many fires start on federal lands and spread onto private ground.

RECOMMENDATION

The Department recommends the Board approve the inclusion of rangeland in portions of northern and southern Malheur County into rangeland fire protection associations, and direct the Department to assist with the formation of the Vale and Jordon Valley Rangeland Fire Protection Associations, pursuant to ORS 477.320.

NEXT STEPS

The Department will work with local landowners in the area to form the Vale and Jordon Valley Rangeland Protection Associations. This will include; developing mutual aid agreements, provide training as requested, offer FEPP equipment as available and any other assistance as requested and feasible.

ATTACHMENTS

- (1) Map of area of consideration
- (2) January 14, 2008 Hearing Report
- (3) January 15, 2008 Hearing Report