

FOREST FIRE PROTECTION COSTS IN EASTERN OREGON

Forest fire protection costs (to landowners) are many times higher in Oregon than in any of the neighboring States. Plus we are the only state where landowners pay anything for large fire suppression. Following is a table that shows the relative landowner costs for forest land owners in the Western United States:

ANNUAL FIRE PROTECTION COST to LANDOWNERS			
STATE	40 acres	100 acres	500 acres
California	-0-	-0-	-0-
Idaho	\$22	\$ 55	\$275
Montana	\$38	\$ 50	\$130
Eastern Oregon	\$78	\$178	\$890
Washington	\$14	\$ 27	\$127

The figures for Eastern Oregon assume a landowner cost of \$1.78 per acre/year (proposed for 2008-09). Oregon forest landowners also pay the entire cost (up to \$15 million for catastrophic fires, over budget amounts). No other surrounding State require this from landowners.

With the cutback in the Forest Service sales we have experienced mill closures in all parts of the East Side and unless something changes very soon there will be more mills cease operation.

Those of us in Central Oregon are faced with long log hauls and with the high cost of fuel it now costs as much (or more) to harvest and deliver logs than they are worth. Right now Pine logs in Eastern Oregon are worth, at the mill about \$300 per thousand board feet. At the same time, with the high cost of fuel, it costs about \$300 per thousand board feet to deliver these logs, leaving nothing for the landowner.

The State legislature could help the Eastern Oregon forest landowners by having the State pay more of the fire fighting cost as is done in neighboring States. If nothing is done there isn't much hope for a viable forest industry survival in Eastern Oregon. We are living on borrowed time and more and more forest land is being converted to other uses all the time.

John Rounds 5/08