

April 21, 2008

State Forester and Board of Forestry
Oregon Department of Forestry
2600 State Street
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Mr. Brown and Board Members,

On April 17, 2008 the Central Oregon District Budget Committee voted to approve the District's 2009 budget. The budget increased 10% but the rate is increasing by 31%. This was a big jump and we do not see any relief in sight. There was much discussion and we approved it with trepidation and would like to voice some strong concerns. We only approved the budget out of respect for the District staff and the need to start the fire season with a budget.


First, we are very satisfied with the level of protection provided us, and the performance of the District in protecting our lands. The issue is, whether Eastern Oregon landowners can sustain continuing rising payments on low productive lands. Profit margins for forest, grazing and farm landowners become less each year. Landowners are at a critical junction.

We are concerned that as these lands become less affordable they will turn to other owners and uses. Already they are being swept up in sub-divisions, destination resorts, hunting preserves, and absentee owners that do little management on the lands. Fuels are building up on some private land as they are on neighboring unmanaged Federal lands.

If a landowner owned 10,000 acres of typical eastern Oregon forest land they would be paying over \$17,000 in forest patrol assessment. There are few mills remaining in Eastern Oregon. Hauling distances are great. Often logging small low productive timber lands is just a break even affair. The land is becoming worthless to them as far as generating any income. Grazing lands are under similar circumstances.

We feel that it is time all of us including the State Forester, the Board of Forestry and the Legislature look at the protection funding scheme in Oregon and make some changes. Eastern Oregon landowners cannot continue at this rate into the future. These lands will continue to convert to other uses. More forest, grazing and agricultural lands will be lost.

We wish we could propose some solutions. We know it is a complicated issue. It will take some time and all of us working together to come to appropriate decisions.

Sincerely,

Michael W. Templeton
Chairman
COD Budget Committee