

Agenda Item No.: 7
Work Plan Title & #: Wildfire Risk Management, Issue 7
Presentation Title: Forest Land Classification Committee Recommendations
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SUMMARY

The purpose of this agenda item is to provide a brief summary of the recommendations developed to improve the Department's Forestland Classification System. In late 2006, the State Forester formed a 29 member Forestland Classification Steering Committee to address this issue. The Department briefed the Board in September 2007 regarding the committee's purpose and activities. The committee's work has been completed and recommendations developed.

CONTEXT

This agenda item relates to the *Forestry Program for Oregon* by contributing to Strategy F. ORS 526.305 through ORS 526.340 describes a process for classifying forestland into Class 1 – timber class, Class 2 – timber and grazing class, or Class 3 – agricultural class, for the purposes of fire patrol assessments. Other statutes in other chapters also address forestland classification. The classification of forestland and rates associated drives the principal source of revenue for fire protection in the form of "Forest Patrol Assessment." The goals of the review were to update the classification system to reflect current conditions, identify ways to improve the efficiency, and develop consistency of administration.

BACKGROUND AND ANALYSIS

As part of the 2004 Fire Program Review, it was recommended that the Department review the forest land classification statues and policies. Starting in January of 2007, as a continuing effort to implement recommendations from the program review, the Steering Committee embarked on the comprehensive review of the forestland classification system. As part of this process three subcommittees were formed to focus on wildland-urban interface, transitional lands, and coordination and assurance. Each of the committees prepared reports on their respective work processes, issues, and recommendations, which were then reviewed by the full committee and developed into a final report.

Steering Committee meetings were held in late 2007 as open forums for constructive dialog to promote understanding of the issues and recommendations. The goal of the meetings was to

arrive at a consensus decision for each recommendation, meeting as many stakeholders' needs as possible within the Department's constraints and mission.

The final product delivered by the committee recommended four core principal steps:

- Changes to ORS Chapter 526 to allow classification committees the ability to classify lands in multiple counties, add a member of the fire service to the classification committee, and add minor statute language to include "interface" in the definition of forestland (currently in process as a legislative concept).
- Changes to OAR Chapter 629 will need to be developed over the next two years and returned to the Board for rule development.
- Update and revise the department's "Assessment of Forestland for Fire Protection" directive (currently in process).
- Development of a comprehensive policy and guidance manual and computer-based information management tools.

The Department plans on using existing personnel to complete the work, recognizing there will be a spike in workload at the staff and district levels, however over time, should decrease as the guidance and tools are developed and become available for field use.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

None at this time, however a full listing of the developed recommendations is included as Attachment 1.

RECOMMENDATION

This agenda item is presented as an update on the department's work in completing the forestland classification review.

NEXT STEPS

At the Board's September 2007 meeting, the Board directed the State Forester to revise the Wildland Risk Management Work Plan to incorporate this issue as a new objective. When the workplan is completed it will be brought back to the Board for approval. In the interim, work is continuing on the development of the committee's recommendations.

ATTACHMENTS

- (1) 2007 Oregon Forestland Classification Review: Final Report, Executive Summary