

**Oregon Department of Forestry
Summary of Bills for 2009 Legislative Session**

PROTECTION FROM FIRE

HB 2215 – Extension of current large-fire cost responsibility for Oregon Forest Land Protection Fund (OFLPF). Through the OFLPF, forest landowners currently cover the first \$15 million of costs annually for suppression of large fires. The state General Fund is responsible for an additional \$10 million. These sums form the \$25 million deductible of a fire insurance policy that landowners and the state purchase each year.

The \$15 million OFLPF commitment sunsets every two years. Without legislative action, it reverts to \$10 million. Landowners historically have supported the higher commitment as part of a broader agreement on sharing of the costs of basic firefighting, severity resources and the insurance policy. These issues are likely to be the subject of budget and policy discussions during the 2009 session.

SB 189 – Forestland classification. This concept refines the process used to identify and classify lands on which assessments are paid for ODF fire protection. Part of the outcome of a 2006 stakeholder review of this process, the concept adds and clarifies definitions, and makes changes to the makeup and scope of county forestland classification committees.

The classification system has not been updated substantively in over 30 years. Much has changed during that time, including expansion of wildland-urban interface areas.

Proposed changes include expanding the membership of county classification committees to include a representative, appointed by the State Fire Marshal, of structural fire protection services, and allowing two or more adjoining counties within a forest protection district to form a single classification committee.

STATE FORESTS

HB 2216 – Board of Forestry bonding authority; forestland acquisition. Pending ongoing negotiations, the state may have a unique opportunity to create a new state forest, the first in more than 50 years, by buying land near Gilchrist, in Klamath county. This concept would make housekeeping changes to update existing Board of Forestry bonding authority to help make this or other potential acquisitions feasible.

Proposed changes include allowing the Board to accept title to lands that may have easements or other encumbrances, and removing the \$750,000 annual ceiling on bonding

authority, which was set in the 1960s and now creates an artificial barrier to virtually any acquisition project.

Bonds issued for forestland purchases would be repaid with timber sale revenues. No General Fund dollars are sought.

ADMINISTRATION

HB 2214 – Forest Products Harvest Tax Rate. Legislation is introduced each session to set harvest tax rates for Forest Practices Act implementation and for support of the Oregon State University Research Lab. This legislation continues the historical approach of sharing funding responsibility for these programs through a combination of harvest tax and General Fund dollars.