

# News Release

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## 2015-16 Fire Program Review Committee completes its work

The Oregon Department of Forestry has received final recommendations of the 2015-16 Fire Program Review Committee, focused on improving Oregon’s “complete and coordinated wildfire protection system.” This concludes a seven-month process and represents the most comprehensive review of the department’s fire program in over a decade. Made up of forest landowners and operators, legislators, governor’s staff and agency partners, the committee proposed changes in three categories: Sustainable large fire funding, sustainable wildfire organization, and wildfire policy.

Sustainable large fire funding recommendations included exploring the creation of a trust fund to pay the public share of large wildfire suppression costs on fires within ODF’s jurisdiction and for reducing wildland fire risk; to continue to buy an annual catastrophic wildfire insurance policy to cover firefighting budget overruns in severe seasons, and also examine other insurance products; and to conduct a study of the cost equity of the state’s protection of west side Bureau of Land Management lands from wildfire.

Sustainable wildfire organization recommendations included exploring several options to improve the state’s “complete and coordinated wildfire protection system” as well as an option to increase “fire severity” funding by \$1.5 million. This would add dollars to the Special Purpose Appropriation, spending authority provided by the Legislature to fund additional firefighting resources during severe wildfire seasons.

Wildfire policy improvements concentrated on the agency partnering to conduct new risk analysis studies. Recommended studies include one to determine the potential of wildfire to move across ownership boundaries, used to allow forest managers to prioritize landscape-level fuels treatments; a study to compare the cost of fighting wildfires in the wildland-urban interface vs. pure forestland and a study to improve prescribed forest burning opportunities and efficiencies. Prescribed burning is a proven tool to reduce wildfire hazards by removing excess forest vegetation. It was also recommended that the agency continue to foster coordination between Rangeland Fire Protection Associations and the BLM and other partners with the aim to strengthen fire suppression capability on Oregon’s rangelands. Privately owned rangelands east of the Cascades do not receive wildfire protection from the state.

The full “2015/2016 Fire Program Review Committee Report to the State Forester” is available on the ODF website, [Oregon.gov/odf](http://Oregon.gov/odf).

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