



"STEWARDSHIP IN FORESTRY"

# Committee for Family Forestlands Conference Call September 19, 2019



Pursuant to public notice made by news release with statewide distribution, a committee meeting of the Committee for Family Forestlands [an advisory body to the Oregon Board of Forestry with authority established in Oregon Revised Statute 527.650] was convened on September 19, 2019 in the Santiam Room of the ODF Operations Building, 2600 State Street, Salem, Oregon

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### ***CFF Committee members participating:***

Evan Barnes, Committee Chair & SW Landowner Rep. (Voting)  
Josh Barnard, Deputy Chief Private Forests (Secretary)  
Kaola Swanson, Environmental Rep. (Voting) (Pacific Forest Trust)  
(phone)  
Rex Storm, AOL/OTFS Ex-Officio  
Barrett Brown, NW Landowner Rep. (Voting) (phone)  
Jim James, OSWA Executive Director Ex-Officio  
John Peel, EO Landowner Rep. (Voting) (phone)

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### ***ODF Staff:***

Susan Dominique, Committee Administrative Support  
Kyle Abraham, Chief ODF Private Forests Division  
Nate Agalzoff, Incentives Coordinator  
Bodie Dowding, Developmental Field Support  
Coordinator

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### ***Members not attending:***

Glenn Ahrens, OSU College of Forestry Ext. Ex-Officio  
Julie Woodward, OFRI Ex-Officio  
USFS State & Private Forestry Rep. (Janelle Geddes)  
S. Mark Vroman, Industry Rep. (Voting) Hampton Family Forests

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### ***Guests:***

Jeremy Felty, OSWA  
Ron Graham, Protection from Fire Division

## **1. Welcome and Introductions/Roll Call**

Barnes welcomed participants remotely joining the meeting and those attending in person. The attendance was recorded noting all local and remote participants. Opening remarks briefly congratulated both Kyle Abraham promoted to Division Chief and Josh Barnard to Deputy Division Chief for the Private Forests Division. (Referenced above.)

## **2. Review of Agenda**

Agenda items scheduled included the Division update, a Fire Protection Update then discussions on the Committee's recommendation process and review of their Charter. Members would also share ideas for prioritizing work plan issues.

## **3. Approval of the June 2019 Minutes**

Barnes invited a motion for approval of the June 2019 Minutes. Peel motioned to approve the minutes as provided. Brown seconded the motion. All were in favor none opposed. The minutes from the June meeting were approved.

## **4. Public Comment**

There was no public comment offered.

## **5. Private Forests Division Update**

Barnard began reporting on the Division's personnel changes mentioned at the start. Lena Tucker, former Private Forests Division Chief had earlier accepted a new position as the Deputy State Forester. That led to subsequent vacancies and recruitments for Division Chief and then Deputy Division Chief. Kyle Abraham was chosen as Chief and Josh as Deputy so there is still Josh's old position as Field Support Manager that is vacant. The Deputy Chief is normally the Secretary to this Committee, so Josh Barnard takes over that role. He announced that his Field Support Unit Manager position will be filled in the interim by two developmental opportunities during the recruitment process. First interim is Bodi Dowding (Check Scaler from State Forests) and then Scott Swearingen (Asst. to the SOA Director) will fill in the interim for the second half of the vacancy. The plan is to fill that position permanently sometime around the first of the year.

Barnes asked the status of the Agency's Initiative. Abraham responded reminding the other members that it had been part of our Agency Request Budget that went to the Governor. That ask was not included in the Governor's Recommended Budget, but some of the elements continued with her direction to establish a Governor's Wildfire Response Council. The work of that Council has been divided between 3 sub-committees. Suppression Committee, Mitigation Committee and Adaption & Recovery Committee. The task of this Council is to research and brainstorm recommendations through the work of the separate committees. A Drafting Committee will bring those recommendations together to present to the full Council Thursday, September 26<sup>th</sup>. There is also going to be a Financing or Funding Committee tasked with figuring out how to pay for the recommended statewide response. Swanson, a member of the Mitigation Committee shared that the thought was to have enough information to make an ask of the Short Session for funding. Storm (another member) added that recommendations are beyond just the funding needs also recommendations for policy development and coordination between the State's extensive stakeholders. Abraham offered staff will re-send a link to the Governor's Wildfire Council Website where agendas and presentation materials are available for public viewing.

<https://www.oregon.gov/gov/policy/Pages/wildfirecouncil.aspx>

Barnes shared that the Governor had recently visited Douglas County to ask and answer questions on the role of utility companies and wildfire starts pertaining to what precautionary actions are being taken by smaller electric coops.

Barnard shared a couple of Board of Forestry items. Looking ahead he described the agenda for the Board's 2-day November 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> meeting. The 7<sup>th</sup> being a Science/Policy Workshop for Board members. The first day the Private Forests Division will provide an update on the Marbled Murrelet Project. The required Technical Report on Marbled Murrelets had been brought and accepted by the Board in April. The current concept is to work with stakeholders on what the preferred options would be within a range that has been identified. The Resource sites specific to the Murrelets and which protection strategies would be relevant. The Board's Science/Policy Workshop topics would be on Young Stand Management, Paired Watershed Studies and a Fire Science related topic. Abraham shared his view that they have ideas building within the Board in terms of revising the Forestry Program for Oregon. So a workshop identifying the role of values in their decision-making and how science informs the process will be interesting and relevant.

At the last September Board meeting there staff An update on the Western Oregon Project and two decisions on the Siskiyou Project. So three components needing decisions. He reported that they did approve the concept of having an Advisory Committee to help the Monitoring Unit on expanding the geographic extent of the literature review. Another topic was around Climate Change which they did not make a decision on.

Abraham did want to note that on the July 24<sup>th</sup> Board meeting Evan and Barrett provided some background and testimony around the Committee's work over the last year presenting the Annual Report and suggesting different work plan items that they see moving forward. At that meeting Barrett Brown was appointed the NW Landowner Representative and Kaola was nominated as Vice-chair of the Committee. He wanted the group to consider nominating for the two vacancies on the Committee. Gilbert Shibley (Landowner-At-Large) whose term ended and the remaining vacancy for public member who is not a forestland owner. James announced that with a joint Tree Farm/OSWA meeting on the 27<sup>th</sup> of September he would put the word out to solicit some volunteers.

## **6. Process for Committee Recommendations and Charter Review**

At the last meeting in June members considered updates to the Committee Charter to better define the recommendation process. Brown began the discussion noting that he and Swanson met over the phone and traded some emails and comments putting together draft changes to begin the discussion. Brown began sharing that the first paragraph addressed how the Committee should move forward with a letter or testimony only after majority approval. The second required that the Committee would also vote on the content of the recommendation. So the Committee will continue to seek consensus but will formalize the recommendation process providing a more thorough accounting

of opposing views as part of the advisory function. So consensus won't be required but the goal remains to seek consensus through rules of quorum. Generally defaulting to Robert's Rules of Order.

Swanson continued with the last two bullets reading; *“The Committee will deliberate the content of its recommendation on a topic in accordance with the highest standards of professionalism, encouragement and respect for minority opinion. Voting and non-voting members of the Committee will interact in letter and spirit with the Oregon Department of Forestry’s Working Guidelines. Then, the CFF Chair is obliged to ensure that any documentation or presentation of the Committee’s majority decision reflects the discussion of the Committee as well as its recommendation. This is particularly true where minorities view or dissent remains after deliberation of voting. Views and presentations of all CFF members including the minority view will be presented in a respectful manner.”* She considered that even in disagreement it is useful to share the differing views with the Board so they can see and understand multiple perspectives on an issue. Brown emphasized that these simple sideboards will go a long way speaking to our credibility as an Advisory Committee. A recommendation can acknowledge the importance of differing views and describe a fairly mature process. Most of the group seemed to agree but it was decided to allow each member time to review and send any suggestions or edits to Brown or Swanson to incorporate and return to this discussion at the next meeting. Barnes thought another addition would be to consider mimicking the Board’s work plan priorities as pertinent to the Committee’s function. James noted some really good compromises with the draft and reiterated Woodward’s concern at the last meeting that the members remember they are charged with focusing and providing recommendations on matters directly related to support of family forestlands. Storm agreed and added that there will be times without unanimous agreement but there is value to the Board to hear that broad range of views from this Committee. He wanted to encourage seeking consensus but in a way that doesn’t obstruct the ability to advise the Board. Swanson conceded that it may make sense to include something that says this Committee will make recommendations only as they relate to the way that family forestland owners are effected by decisions of the Board of Forestry. Barnes agreed that he thought it good to note how recommendations are arrived at.

## 7. Work Plan Items Over the Next Year

Barnard wanted an opportunity to refresh the members on the 2019-2020 CFF Work plan priorities that they chose to present and use as a guide to developing agenda items as part of the Committee’s Annual Report to the Board. Members proposed the following issues would inform their work for the year : Water Quality, Family Forestland Viability, Landowner Recreational Immunity, Input to the Board of Forestry on Key Topics, Forest Health, Fire, Forest Chemical Use, Seed and Seedling Availability, and Climate Change. He noted that under these headings there are sub-headings that provide more context and then asked what things are top priority for the Committee related to future agendas so staff may develop materials.

Comments from members:

- Water Quality topic will continue to be pretty high on the Board of Forestry’s work plan.
- The Siskiyou, the TMDL that DEQ is working on is a new product to many so they thought it might be of value to gain better understanding about Total Maximum Daily Loads as it may inform science-based rule reviews. There was a request to gain better understanding of the TMDL and modeling assumptions with just a plain language overview. Abraham agreed that there is an opportunity to at least keep the Committee informed of how that work is progressing both on the DEQ alignment piece and the Siskiyou review for the other method development. Barnard noted that there will be a similar effort through the proposed Advisory Committee that Marganne Allen will be working with.
- A suggestion to have an overall topic BOF Decisions or BOF Topics. Issues that the BOF are currently evaluating would be the ones to prioritize and be an ideal outline for the CFF workplan considering preparation timelines for the Board to most effectively receive recommendations.
- Suggestion to ensure that not only the Board topics should be considered but topics and issues originating from the landowner community that need consideration by the Board.
- Relating to eastern Oregon infrastructure challenges and the diminishing ability for timberland owners to be successful, Abraham thought that updates on the Federal Forest Restoration Program on the eastside would clarify the opportunities. Another agenda item could be to learn what specifically going on in the Partnership and Planning

Program. There may be places where there is a nexus that this Committee might be able to support that work. (A suggestion was made to send out the Eastern Oregon White Paper on family forestland issues for review as it was composed out of this committee years ago.)

- Keeping up to speed on the collaborative work happening through the OSU Forestry Extension. Ahrens noted that there is a new program, Oregon State Extension Fire Program which would be valuable to keep informed on.

## 8. Fire Update

Ron Graham, Deputy Chief of the Fire Protection Division was invited to provide an update on fire season, statistics and strategies. He began noting that they were looking at some increased fire potential primarily in western Oregon, west of the Cascades this year. Some of that played out and some of it didn't. Certainly not to the extent that the predictive services unit said it would. The forecasting for September and October are for normal temperatures and precipitation. Lightning was down in general compared to peak years. Storms came with precipitation, not the dry lightning. And he said the largest factor in suppression was the amount of available resources, everything from private industry crews that ODF contracts for, with equipment, other State and Federal partners. There were adequate resources on hand to get on fires early enough to stop them quickly. He shared other factors, as the State is also coming out of drought and fortunately didn't have any big landscape fires from Forest Service lands threatening ODF-protected lands. All combined really at each fire we had the resources at the ready for initial attack. He announced that there will be a large portion of west of the Cascades with the exception of (Southwest Oregon and DFPA, and CFPA) going out of fire season by the end of this week or early next week. Even some areas of eastern Oregon got some pretty adequate rainfall. It's kind of winding down quick. But you get the right conditions, right fuels and the threat is still there. Statistically year to date he reported ODF is tracking pretty close to the normal number of fires on ODF-protected lands. We average right around 1000 fires/year. And as of today we are at 904, just slightly below that with a couple of months to go on the calendar year. He shared that the real story is the acres. Last year-to-date we had almost 75,000 acres burned by this time. The 10 year average is around 40,000 acres burned year-to-date. This year we are at 16,000+ acres so a significant decrease in the number of acres. The exceptions are the Milepost 97 and the Ward Fire, which were our largest fires which were joint jurisdiction fires as well. 97% decrease in lightning fire acres. Milepost 97 Fire was the only FEMA declaration (Federal Emergency Management Agency) fire. He explained "FEMA fires" are where the (FMAG) Fire Management Assistance Grant Program provides a reimbursement for 75% of the qualifying suppression costs during a FEMA declared incident. FEMA has a post-disaster grant program that expands to areas that have a FEMA FMAG (Fire Management Assistance Grant) declaration can get post-disaster funding to do pre-hazard mitigation. There is a fair amount of money nationally that is set aside for pre-hazard mitigation but the grant requirements are fairly stringent currently. Our Federal partners are really ramping up their prescribed burning over in central Oregon. He reported that there was a prescribed burn last week in the Prineville area where there was some smoke into Prineville but still at levels under exceedance. The Smoke Management Program is still refining their forecasting and burn approvals with the new Smoke Rules. It's something we are watching in this first year and fall burning is really ramping up.

Regarding the Governor's Council on Wildfire Response he praised the Committee's interest in the work. The Protection Division is watching and waiting to see what kind of recommendations come out of that. He mentioned that the Division is striving forward with some technology updates. Landowner donating into the Oregon Forestland Protection Fund for the 2016 fire season led to some money for strategic investments. Some of the projects funded were extra detection cameras building out that system state-wide. Some guard stations in remote areas where we have challenges in staffing, housing, suppression resources. And then some radio communication bandwidth build outs to try to move that technology forward. Later considered was funding for our forward-looking infrared project for the Partnavia that we use for detection, forest health monitoring, fire mapping, air attack platform. That project is back on track and staff are hopeful everything will be ready to go for the next fire season in our own aircraft. The challenge will be scheduling competing project requests like initial attack, fire detection, mapping, forest health? Graham added that they did some piloting using night vision technology, same thing we are going to do with the forward-looking infrared but with the Single Engine Air Tanker (SEAT) operations and the safety of night water drops on fires. All of the data and testing so far points to really high potential for that being a successful program. All of our safety concerns were mitigated but we continue to work really closely with our federal partners who have a large say in

aviation operations across the country with concerns of their own, especially when it comes to their ground staff and employees operating in that world during nighttime.

He then touched on the tracking of the severity and extent of fire seasons annually. Moving into the late 90's, early 2000's acres burned increased on average 128%. Our average from the late 90's to the *late* 2000's was over 26,000 acres burned of ODF-protection and when you look at 2011 forward we are averaging 41,700 acres burned on ODF-protection. Over that time frame our federal partners all agencies in Oregon are seeing that same increase across the board, pretty proportionate increase on acres burned. Which has really challenged ODF as an agency both in capacity and in funding. Where we had a funding model between 2006 and 2012 averaging less than \$9.7 million dollars gross fire costs per year. That's what we were billed for. That's what we were funded for. That's what we had capacity for. That's what we had authorization for. All that really shifted for us beginning in 2013 and onward where we are now averaging over \$63 million in gross fire costs each year. And a couple of big years where we were in the \$100 million dollar range. This year will certainly help bring that average down however costs continue when we are still financially cleaning up those fires from 2013 on. Big holdouts financially are the USFS as there is a lot of reconciliation needed to adjudicate cost-share fires. And FEMA which requires a lot of documentation and delay as we don't get to close out a FEMA claim until all the bills are paid so they can see our costs. So those things have really driven our agency imbalance in our funding and cash flow and ability to pay other bills. So we developed a pretty aggressive financial plan and are working closely with FEMA, USFS and BLM, BIAL, federal partners helping to prioritize the workload. He characterized that all partners have been working really well together to help with this situation. It's a weird position to be in where we have an approved biennial at the current service level but we have a real cash flow problem with the agency ability to carry these costs over multiple years. He noted that many of the western States are having similar issues involving FEMA fire management assistance grant program as well. So that funding/cost-share/reconciliation dynamic exists in all of those. And Utah, is feeling the pinch as well. So Oregon is not totally unique in this situation. It's a changing dynamic with the increased complexity of fires in the West.

## **9. Next Meeting**

They group discussed future meeting dates and agenda items. They also curious as to the opportunity discussed in June to hold public meetings around the State to focus on concerns related specifically to the Areas. Barnard shared that the Department has placed some travel restrictions on staff as part of a cost-saving effort until the financial reconciliation is complete. He presumed off site meetings may be possible April 2020 or later. He hoped it will be possible to schedule an offsite meeting in May or June and another in the fall.

Members began checking on their availability for the next couple of meeting dates. Barnard said that October is a very busy month for staff with the Operator of the Year tour and RFPC meetings. Some of the members were busy as well. November 21<sup>st</sup> in Salem was agreed upon. But members brought up that there could be business to do in October prior to the BOF meeting in November so a compromise was to schedule another conference call on Friday, October 11<sup>th</sup> from 10 to 12.

Agenda items the members suggested: an update on the BOF Retreat and a continued discussion on Committee processes. There was interest in hearing from Partnership and Planning as well as a TMDL briefing. For the Good of the Order, Barnard reminded members that the Operator of the Year nominations are due by September 25<sup>th</sup>. Members should connect with their local stewardship foresters if they have a nomination.

## **10. Meeting was adjourned.**

