



Committee for Family Forestlands Meeting April 14, 2021



Pursuant to public notice made by news release with statewide distribution, a 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 April 14, 2021 as a virtual online meeting hosted off-site.

CFF Committee members participating:

Eric Hartstein, Interim Private Forests Deputy Chief
Kaola Swanson, Conservation Rep. (Voting/Vice Chair) Sustainable NW
Glenn Ahrens, OSU College of Forestry Ext./College of Forestry Ex-Officio
Wendy Gerlach, Citizen-At-Large (Voting) Columbia Land Trust Board
Amanda Astor, Forest Policy Manager AOL Ex-Officio
Amy Jahnke OSWA Ex-Officio
Julie Woodward, OFRI Ex-Officio
Evan Barnes, Committee Chair & SW Landowner Rep. (Voting)
John Peel, EO Landowner Rep. (Voting)
Barrett Brown, NW Landowner Rep. (Voting)

ODF Staff:

Scott Swearingen, Field Support Unit Manager
Ryan Gordon, Family Forestland Coordinator

Members not in attendance:

Janelle Geddes, USFS State & Private Forestry Ex-Officio
S. Mark Vroman, Industry rep (Voting) Hampton Family Forests

Guests/Public:

Ron Graham, Deputy Chief Protection from Fire

1. Welcome and Review of the Agenda

Barnes called the meeting to Order and asked for a roll call. There weren't any comments or questions on the agenda.

2. Roll Call

(See above.)

3. Approval of the April Minutes

Barnes requested a Motion and a Second to approve the minutes from the April 14th meeting. Peel moved to approve as corrected. Brown seconded the motion. All voting members voted to approve.

4. Public Comment

No public comment was offered.

5. Private Forests Update

To begin, Hartstein provided a brief Division update. News from the Department and the Board was that the Governor had designated Jim Kelly as the Chair of the Board of Forestry effective immediately. So next week will be the first meeting for the 3 new BOF members and new Chair. The new members are Shandra Ferrari, Karla Chambers and Ben Deumling. They will join current members, Jim Kelly, Brenda McComb and Joe Justice. The meeting will include an introduction to the Department's Executive Team who will provide Program Overviews and introduction to the major topics that may come before the Board in the next year or so. And the various Strategic Planning Initiatives that occur both at the Board and the Department levels. He shared that in the afternoon a virtual tour is planned that focuses on Stewardship Agreements and a last "stop" will focus on Shared Stewardship and opportunities to increase the pace and scale of forest restoration across boundaries. Hartstein noted that there was still one BOF seat to fill and that the Senate Rules and Executive Appointments Committee will have at least one more round during this session. But he hadn't heard of any new nomination. The Governor declared April as Oregon's Arbor Month! Extension of the celebration was to provide an extended period of time for commemorative tree plantings throughout the State.

The Division was still waiting to fill vacant positions for a Monitoring and Forest Health Manager and as well as a Forest Pathologist position. Hartstein was asked about the new Area Directors. Astor offered that Brian Pew would be the new Area Director for Eastern Oregon. Dave Larson from DFPA is taking over Dave Lorenz's Directorship.

6. Legislative Update

Hartstein continued with the Legislative update. He had sent out a Bill Tracker which highlighted the latest Priority bills that Private Forests Division was tracking. The 13th was a pretty important deadline for policy bills that had to have passed out of their committee of origin by midnight so a number of bills he had noted as a higher priority are no longer active in the Session. In addition, there are a number of bills currently in the Revenue Committee (where the legislative deadlines do not apply). Those included HB 2070 which is the Governor's and Department's Harvest Tax Bill. HB 2379 which replaces the Harvest Tax with Severance Tax as well as the bills reinstating the Reforestation Tax Credit, HB 2632 and 2782.

Astor noted the complexity around these topics and reported a lot of discussions and informational hearings. Depending upon what tax structure is chosen there's going to have to be some sort of reconciliation about how to move forward and the House Revenue Committee Chair makes those decisions. Hartstein affirmed that only the bills that originate out of the Governor's Office and ODF (HB 2070 the Forest Products Harvest Tax bill) may be supported by the Department. Formally ODF can have no position on other bills but can provide information towards implementation to the Legislators. ODF's budget is in the Joint Ways and Means so depending on the direction coming out of Revenue there will probably be a hearing something sometime in May. Hartstein continued that there are a number of other bills that Private Forests is tracking relating to wildfire. The Omnibus Wildfire Bills are now SB 762 and HB 2722. They are also watching HB 3160 which would add a \$10 surcharge onto insurance policies to fund activities related to restoration, protection and recovery from wildfires. As well as HB 3127, which is in the House Special Committee on Wildfire Recovery. And HB 3127 is really just a placeholder bill that the Chair intends to amend to include funding for fire recovery efforts broadly. But also includes Natural and Cultural Resource recovery from the 2020 wildfires with focus on erosion control, riparian and floodplain restoration, shrinking water intake protection, geotechnical analyses, culvert repairs etc. That has a \$84 million dollar price tag.

7. 2021 Fire Season Readiness and Outlook

Ron Graham, Deputy Chief of Fire Protection/Deputy Chief of Operations was invited to provide a presentation and update on the fire season outlook and fire season readiness for the Department. He provided some historical context relating to what happened last fire season which they were tracking early on to late spring as normal to slightly below normal fire season pre-Labor Day. And then the Labor Day east wind event happened, and things went crazy, and it became an unprecedented fire season in terms of costs, number of acres burned, and resources lost, residences and structures destroyed and loss of life. A real-time worst-case scenario. He reviewed some of the 10-year averages and emphasized that human-caused fires are typically the leading cause. Typically, lightning fires usually account for most of the acres burned as they are more likely in the back country, at higher elevations, harder to access, less roads, and unmanaged timber. The number of acres burned on ODF-protection now was up 269% percent even with relatively little change in the number of fires. He expressed his frustration with the term "fire season" as being misleading. That it is an administrative procedure applied with statutory authority and fire season declaration. The term always acts as a fire prevention tool which informs industry and the public about the restrictions and activities allowed with increasing risk. But fire is not seasonal there is fire response every month of the year. He warned that the PNW landscape in general has experienced increasingly higher fire risk. There are more and more fires near communities, the wildland/urban interface. 64% of those fires occur within 1 mile of the WUI. With 87% of those fires human-caused. So hugely increasing the complexity of suppression and increased number of conflagration acts, FEMA fires, deployments for ODF and OSFM Incident Management Teams and others. Again, lots of property, infrastructure, and fatalities. The State's system was built financially for the kinds of fires we had 20 years ago. The increasing severity has made the \$10 million dollar cost model insufficient and buried ODF financially as far as how fires were paid for, fire cost accounting and tracking models. All the different ways they can recover fire costs significantly does lower those net fire costs but there was still quite a significant increase. The legislature sets Key Performance Measures (KPM) for each agency. One of the Department's KPMs is keeping 98% or more of our fires at 10 acres or less. This is the measure the Department strives for; this is what they build for. This is what they staff and try to fund to maintain an adequate level of protection based on the average

worst fire season and maintaining 98% effectiveness. He reported that the weather outlook for May, June and July remain somewhat uncertain, as they are not sure of what the El Nino, La Nina factors are going to be. But certainly, over on most of the eastside, southeast side there's more confidence in warmer than normal temperatures May, June, July. But April year to date, they've run 84 fires for 350 acres already. Debris burning has been the number one cause. The 10-year average year-to-date is 26 fires for 226 acres. So, we are well above the number of fires, well above the number of acres. For the first half of April alone they have had 60 fires for 133 acres. Over the last ten years for the first half of April nothing comes close to what they saw. The State is not in declared fire season; they don't have seasonal firefighters on. Not hired, not tested, not trained, not equipped, and not ready to go. Federal partners the same thing. Back to the conditions, he stressed that they know drought plays a part. Precipitation-wise for May, June, July they are pretty confident there will be below normal precipitation during these three months. So that is not looking really good for us. They had some fires in Deschutes County early on with the conditions there. Klamath County just had their drought declared in April and Lake and Jackson County also requested drought declarations. Its starting and building again. And he emphasized that entering peak fire season, Washington, Oregon, California, Nevada and the Great Basin could be busy. And keen competition for resources. He reported that the Emergency Board (E-Board) provided the Agency money for some extra positions and some aviation capacity. This is in addition to the Severity Funding request in the standard Agency-requested Budget. The E-Board gave ODF temporary funds closely aligned with the Agency-Request Budget and Governor's Recommended Budget for wildfire risk mitigation. \$5 million dollars for these fuels projects. A lot of them were shovel-ready fuels projects investing across all ownerships. More funding is within SB 762 the Governor's Omnibus bill for additional leadership positions and adding to our seasonal firefighting capacity. He added that Wildfire Risk Mitigation work with 37 projects, over 7000 acres of fuels reduction that includes some prescribed fire. Showing even in a short term what we can do with the added capacity. The goal for us is through our Agency-Requested Budget and the Governor's Recommended Budget and these Omnibus bills and a Legislatively-Adopted Budget they can get these positions and more wildfire risk mitigation permanently funded. He noted that ODF has a Governance Board established in 2019 that is overseeing our IMTs to ensure the right capacity on our team rosters. Ensuring that we are giving our people adequate rest, work on extending Police & Fire retirement benefits and focusing on critical incident stress and responder health and wellness programs. Graham then reviewed a graph illustrating the Severity Program and the strategic positioning of resources. He highlighted a build out of the fire detection camera network and infrared platforms and other aviation investments. The Oregon Forestland Protection Fund, through the Emergency Fire Cost Committee have the ability to do strategic investments if all of their Large Fire money within a year isn't used. One of those investments was in the Department's Partnarvia aircraft adding an infrared platform night vision goggles. That's been a huge investment that has paid off. We've had great success stories of getting these fires detected with infrared and night vision goggle technology that we wouldn't have seen for a day, or days and could have grown to the next Large, costly fire. He went on to explain the 'funding cake' of Severity. The program stands now at \$5 million of which \$3 million dollars are landowner funds. There's a \$2 million dollar component out of the General Fund and then the other part of the match for the General Fund is in the insurance policy part of it. They did secure the insurance, a \$25 million dollar policy with a \$50 million deductible and 3% premium increase.

When the discussion came back to cause related to powerline fires Barnes provided some clarification of the complex situation that the utilities are in mitigating fire starts or affecting power shutdowns. Then in response to a question on the logistics of early season wildfires, Graham explained that they have to rely on their militia (permanent staff across programs) to staff engines and respond. That and early outreach to industry & government partners and the contract community, an all-hands approach. He emphasized that these early fires affect fire costs because early response costs aren't included in the budget. Costs incurred in the early use of contract resources, overtime, working with all partners in the complete, coordinated system. The environmental changes and drought has changed the face of fire and the organization and budget wasn't built for the fire severity and duration they are seeing now.

8. Post-Fire Recovery Updates

Ryan Gordon, Family Forestlands Coordinator provided a few highlights in terms of changes since the last update. His number one concern has been and remained capacity. Capacity to serve impacted landowners, and to support the Agencies that we partner with. Particularly the Farm Services Agency (FSA) and NRCS to deliver those assistance programs. He believes the current conversation will be to game out some different scenarios on how to move forward depending on

various levels of funding including other partners, other grant or funding opportunities that maybe somewhat non-traditional for ODF.

He then reported on seedling efforts, and that the subject has gotten a lot of play in the media as of late. A lot of interviews and work with partners which seems to only highlight how complicated the issue is. Potentially he sees a lot of opportunities to fund the purchase of seedlings and make them available. But the capacity to get those seedlings into the right hands and get them into the ground is another challenge. They are having discussions with representatives from One Tree Planted, Arbor Day, and American Forests Foundation thinking about ways to partner with them. Those discussions include funding a full-time position, maybe at ODF, maybe at OSU Extension, maybe somewhere else to really take this topic on and devote full-time to it. Swanson offered that in her conversation with USFS Diane Haasey she highlighted another consideration that not only do you need seedlings, but you need people to get into the nursery business. Haasey hasn't seen forestry students gravitating towards that career path. It is hard to get people to get into that industry. How to build that workforce, elevate the opportunity and the need. A maintained state nursery could have used student internships as capacity and promote that industry but that is an opportunity lost. Regardless Gordon agreed to follow up with Ahrens on that suggestion. And would continue that thread with OSU as party to the idea.

Gordon continued noting he's had conversations with Business Oregon and others as well in an expanding conversation. He acknowledged the work that Sustainable NW was beginning trying to build some cross-boundary partnerships and start connecting some dots between the different basins that have been impacted here in western Oregon working closely with watershed councils, (McKenzie, Santiam and Clackamas) or organizations like the Bonneville Environmental Foundation. Connecting on the current work being done as well as challenges they are facing. Identifying the work and developing proposals. Swanson added that by getting people together and talking about it they are trying to hone in on what they want to propose for different grant funding sources to actually put on the ground. She saw the biggest opportunity right now is through NRCS with the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCP) Grant that would bring in money that is additional to the normal State funding from NRCS through EQIP. She reiterated Ryan's comment that the big gap seems to be technical capacity to help deliver the programs. There are lots of requests in with the State right now hopefully to fund some of those positions. But as the problem isn't going away, there will be a continuing need to look for longer term funding.

Astor offered that AOL has a lot of reforestation businesses that they represent as well so she's seen a huge reduction in capacity due to all of the stressors and reductions in H2AVisas and migrant workers which has been hugely impactful to having the capacity to replant, nursery workers, pickers etc. a big component of this issue. A lot of people are really concerned about getting trees in the ground and how they might survive at this point. Swanson and Astor would follow up on what support was needed hopefully come up with potential solutions. Barnes brought up again the idea of a white sheet or published information on nursery set up, financing/debt potential for interested agricultural landowners. What's the process? How does it go? And where do they jump in? A business case for a seedling nursery or supply chain wholesale/distribution need. Gordon noted that some of the large commercial growers don't necessarily lack space or capacity to grow more and are willing to invest but they want to have some certainty in the numbers so that they know they need to produce that at least for a period of time. Now he is thinking about what some of the ways would be to annually publish a market study to help provide those numbers and that certainty. Part of that effort has been digging into the Phipps Nursery workgroup solutions or ideas as a beginning. Ensuring the demand Sustainable NW is looking at a RCCP for a batch ordering process so small owners could be competitive in the private market by being able to pre-order so that small timber owners have reliability in seedlings being available and producers a certain expectation of delivery. Gordon ended by asking the members to consider what their role might be in all of this discussion? He suggested that CFF as somewhat of a policy-oriented committee support the concept of post-fire restoration as the 4th of the three issues around fire. Currently focused on prevention, mitigation, suppression, not so much post-fire restoration as a regular part of the dialog around wildfire. Because we know fires are going to burn and we know we are going to be in this position. And we'd be a lot better off if we had a little bit of funding and some structure to support it. So that would be a potential policy role that this Committee could promote or become more involved with as a committee and advisory voice. In many cases the discussion of recovery can and should begin before we've even pulled all the crews off the fire. Especially for Large fires we are actually in a much better place if we start considering some of that work and even that data collection while

we have resources on scene and can engage landowners even to start thinking about Emergency Forest Restoration Program (EFRP) and some of the immediate actions that they might be able to take.

9. July Report to Board of Forestry

Barnes opened by asking about the potential of an in-person versus a BOF virtual meeting in July when the Committee will offer their Annual Report. Neither staff was aware of any changes to the COVID restrictions by the Agency by then. Dominique picked it up with an overview of the process of putting the draft report together. In drafting the report, she goes through the agendas and discussions throughout the year and summarizes the Committee's work. Going back over this year the agendas (shortened and held virtually with ZOOM) were heavy with Department updates. She hasn't really been able to distinguish any specific projects or products, aside from perhaps the Seedling workgroup, that jumped out as action items. So, it is likely that the Report will be significantly shorter than in the past. She asked members for their direction to her in composing the draft of content and format. She then outlined the parts of the Report: description of the Committee and its role; membership; the Chair's introduction; acknowledgements; listing of priority issues and summary of work; Committee Work Plan. She reminded members that they would be presenting before a new Board of Forestry who may be unfamiliar with the Committee's function and availability. So, it will be an important introduction to the Board members. What does the Committee want the new Board members to know about them? Swanson responded that rather the report could focus more on the future priorities and needs, their work plan. Brown suggested they begin by keeping the topics familiar as the BOF is just beginning to digest their own work plan, so support their grasp of the issues that are currently before them. And then find a way to steal just a small number of minutes to put a face to the Committee and remind them who we are and how we work together. He clarified make sure we are using common language and common topics where we can. Again, our job is to try and make them more effective in their work and particularly where it touches on private forests. Astor offered using the Charter or bylaws of the Committee upfront as a frame of reference to the report. Dominique recalled the intent early last year to mirror the Board topics with the intent of providing recommendation in a timely fashion and Brown agreed on using that opportunity to inform their work plan and be a little more hands-on in the actual topics before the BOF. Gordon noted that it is a good concept to apply after the BOF retreat in October. Dominique suggested prioritizing (at this point) on the Division work plan. To support the Division and their priorities if the plans align. There were questions regarding the Board's ability to lobby on forest tax issues to the legislature. Or how the Committee could make that kind of request to Board members on behalf of family woodland owners. Gordon expressed that BOF members had an open invitation to join CFF meetings and technically there usually is one member that would participate in the meetings and discussions, that practice could be cultivated again. Gerlach suggested even a briefing periodically if there was a topic the members wanted to be more closely connected on. In the meantime, Dominique offered to get a draft together by the next meeting on May 20th to finalize for presentation to the July Board of Forestry Meeting, July 21st. In the course of a conversation regarding testifying before the legislature, Brown noted that the Committee could recommend that the BOF take a stand on certain issues, but the Charter makes clear that they are to advise the work of the Board not the Legislature.

A suggestion was floated to recommend that as Post-Fire Recovery belongs a priority for the State as well as and along with Prevention, Mitigation, and Fire Suppression. At least a written recommendation could be part of the presentation. Gordon supported the idea but as an employee he had to defer composition of such a letter to the members.

10. Committee and Partner Updates/Adjourn

Barnes asked for any other topics for the Good of the Order, none were offered. He closed the meeting with the comment that "Most things in our lives we have a measure of control over, but these fires are out of control and affect everybody immensely." He thought that the report at the end of the year would stress that to the Board of Forestry. He planned to add that to his introduction and bring it to the next meeting and report draft. With no other items, he adjourned the meeting on schedule.