

Fire Protection Division Strategic Initiatives

October 2015 – Proposed Changes

Status of 2015-17 Fire Protection Division Initiatives and Proposed New Initiatives

1. Protection from Fire
A. Implementing the Wildfire Protection Act – Strategic Investments
B. Rangeland Protection Associations
C. Smoke Management Plan
D. Fire Fighter Legal Defense – 2011 HB 2123B (Continued)
E. Forest Protection Association Agreements (Continued)
F. Fire Prevention Rules Update (Continued)
G. Annual and ongoing topics (Continued)
H. 2015 Fire Program Review – Sustainable Fire Organization (New)

*Strikeout indicates the initiative are completed.

*Bold indicates new initiative proposed.

Introduction

The Fire Protection Division’s mission is to protect Oregon forestlands from fire, through a complete and coordinated fire protection system with our cooperators, including fire prevention, suppression, investigation and cost collection. The overarching programmatic goal is to minimize the cost of suppression and the value of loss to resources by aggressive wildland fire initial attack, secondary only to the protection of human life. The Fire Protection Division’s proposed Board work plan is as follows:

Completed Initiatives

- A. “Implementing the Wildfire Protection Act – Strategic Investments”
 - a. This initiative was completed with the close of the Strategic Investment Committee’s work to establish an implementation plan for considering Oregon Forest Land Protection Fund (OFLPF) investments in the protection system. To date, no “strategic investments” have been initiated, due to funding availability from OFLPF. At the January 2016 Emergency Fire Cost Committee meeting, protection staff will present a prioritized set of proposals for future investment considerations.

Completed Initiatives (*continued*)

B. "Rangeland Protection Associations"

- a. This initiative was completed with the passage of the 2015-2017 biennial budget, which included two General Fund appropriations:
 - i. \$1.2 M to provide for services and equipment in support of the Rangeland wildfire protection effort. Distribution of these funds will be a grant process, implemented through the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board.
 - ii. \$276,372 is allocated toward supporting 2.5 FTE to support the administration and operations of the Rangeland Protection Associations.

C. "Smoke Management Plan"

- a. The Division completed its five-year multi-stakeholder review of the Smoke Management Plan. Ultimately, this review was closed with minor "housekeeping" adjustments to the Smoke Management Plan.

Ongoing Initiatives

D. "Firefighter Legal Defense"

- a. Develop Oregon Administrative Rules as necessary to provide procedures and accountability under the existing statute. (BOF consent agenda item: November 2015)

E. "Forest Protection Association Agreements"

- a. Review and update as necessary, agreements between Forest Protective Associations (FPA) and the Board of Forestry. Two agreements remain for consideration: North West Oregon - Forest Protective Association and Eastern Oregon – Forest Protective Association.

F. "Fire Prevention Rules Update"

- a. Review and update as necessary, Oregon Administrative Rules, to resolve existing rule contradictions and clarify or upgrade fire prevention rules to improve common goal performance. A prevention committee is currently engaged making good progress.

G. "Annual and ongoing topics"

- a. Board of Forestry annual approval of the Forest Protection District and Rangeland Protection Association annual budgets. Review and consideration of the annual letters from the FPA's to the State.

New Initiatives

H. "2015 Fire Program Review – Sustainable Fire Organization"

INTRODUCTION:

For the last three fire seasons, Oregon has experienced a significant increase in wildland fires, and related damages and costs. Contributing to an increasing duration and intensity of high fire danger periods have been long-term drought conditions, significant lightning events, limited snow pack and record breaking temperature periods. The amount of firefighting resources required has at times taxed the protection system, both financially and operationally. The increased need for agency resources has also coincided with a period of high workloads in the Department's other programs (State Forests and Private Forests), often delaying critical work in those program areas. In response to these challenges, the Department is initiating a strategic initiative to move towards a more sustainable fire organization for the future. A critical first step in implementing this initiative is to convene a "Fire Program Review Committee" comprised of key stakeholders and partners.

IMPLEMENTATION:

The 2015 Fire Program Review Committee will begin its work this December with a short-term focus on the February legislative session and a long-term focus on the Agency request budget for the 2017-2019 biennium. The committee will complete its work in June of 2016 and will focus its effort in two areas:

1. Sustainable Large Fire Funding

- a. Short-term goal for February session:
 - i. Seek alignment to sustain current catastrophic Insurance Policy for the 2016 fire season.
- b. Long-term goal for 2017-2019 biennial budget development:
 - i. Consider a new model for large fire funding, including a self-insurance model and/or an alternate structure to the current private insurance.

2. Sustainable Fire Organization

- a. Short-term goal for February session:
 - i. Identify immediate capacity needs to address critical shortages in the protection system, as we enter into the 2016 fire season.
- b. Long-term goal for 2017-2019 biennial budget development:
 - i. Broad review of the current Agency organizational challenges inherent in supporting three operating programs, in the context of more challenging fire seasons. Consider the development of legislative concepts and policy option packages to address these challenges for the 2017 full legislative session.