

Frequently Asked Questions about Forestland Classification

- **Why are we doing this process?** To improve the accuracy and equity of the Fire Patrol Assessment so the appropriate acres are being assessed the appropriate rate.
- **What is Fire Patrol Assessment?** Oregon Department of Forestry provides wildland fire protection on private, county and state owned forest and rangelands within their Fire Protection District Boundaries. This fire protection service is funded by a combination of an assessment on lands within the Fire Protection District and the General Funds for the State of Oregon. The landowner contribution is termed the Fire Patrol Assessment. Currently, the General Fund and the landowner's assessment each contribute approximately 50% of the funding at the district level. The current landowner rates in the district are \$1.62/acre for class 2 timberland and \$.69/acre for class 3 grazing land.
- **What is included in a Forestland Classification?** A map that identifies timberlands and grazing lands that meet the definitions set forth in Oregon Revised Statutes and Administrative Rules. Timberland is defined as all forestland primarily suitable for joint use of timber production and the grazing of livestock. Grazing lands are defined as all forestland that is primarily suitable for grazing or other agricultural uses. Grazing lands may contain undeveloped grasslands if such grasslands are in close proximity and intermingled with timberland.
- **Who gave the committee the authority to complete this work?** Oregon Revised Statutes and Administrative Rules.
- **How was the classification committee formed?** According to State Statute, one representative was appointed by the State Forester, one appointed by Oregon State University Extension Service and three members appointed by the County Commissioners, the Union County Fire Chief and Chief of the RFD served as an advisory member.
- **Where do I find my current Fire Patrol Assessment?** The Fire Patrol Assessment is located in your property taxes, collected by the County Assessor and passed on to the local ODF district.
- **Will this affect the Fire Patrol Assessment that I currently pay?** For most landowners it will create a change for several reasons. The differences in the accuracy of the mapping technology in the 1960's and today is enough to create small changes even if the timber and grazing lands are exactly as they were in the 60's . Other reasons include, land use changes that were not captured and areas that were assigned the wrong classification.

- **What effect will this have on ODF's budget level if more lands are included?** If more lands are included, this will spread the costs across more acres and slow the rate of increase landowners pay assuming the level of protection stays the same. The level of protection is determined by ODF and the Budget Committee which is composed of landowners' representatives.
- **What is forestland?** "Forestland" has a very broad definition when used in the fire related statutes. The definition for "Forestland" is any woodland, brush land, timberland, grazing land or clearing that, during any time of the year, contains enough forest growth, slashing or vegetation to constitute, in the judgment of the forester, a fire hazard, regardless of how the land is zoned or taxed.
- **What is a Minimum Assessment?** Each lot of record must pay a minimum assessment of \$18.75. This minimum assessment helps defray some of the additional administrative and operational costs of providing wildland protection on small parcels where, figured on an acreage basis, the assessment for forest protection would not reach \$18.75.
- **What is Dual Assessment?** An assessment for fire protection from two different entities on the same parcel. An example is an assessment from ODF on the forestlands on a parcel for the purposes of wildland fire protection and an assessment from a Rural Fire Protection District on the value of the structures and up to five acres for purposes of structure protection.
- **How are Agricultural lands defined?** Those lands that do not meet the definition of forestland and that are being actively farmed. These lands were delineated through editing of 2005 color aerial photography. The basic intent was to include all lands that were being actively farmed in the agricultural lands class. Since lands that are actively farmed pose less of a fire threat, these lands would be excluded from the assessment process.
- **How are agricultural lands classified?** Agricultural lands that are actively being farmed are excluded from this process.
- **How are lands under CRP contracts classified?** CRP lands are being classified based on the current vegetation type present in the most recent aerial photography (2005). At the conclusion of the CRP contract if the land is converted back into agricultural lands, they then would be exempted.
- **How can a landowner go about opting out of fire protection?** Opting out for landowners with classified lands within the Fire Protection District boundaries is a rigorous process. A landowner must provide a robust fire protection plan that needs to be approved by the Oregon Board of Forestry. The specific requirements for what is needed can be found in Oregon Revised Statute 477.210

(2) and within Oregon Administrative Rule 629-042-0005. At present, no such plans exist in the State of Oregon.

- **What is the purpose of the Public Meeting?** We are offering public meetings to share the County Classification Committee's findings with landowners in the County.
- **What is the purpose of the Public Hearing?** The Public Hearing is a mandatory and formal process that must occur prior to implementation of the findings of the classification effort. This hearing is a time when interested persons can object or offer changes to the proposed classification. Following the hearing the committee may make such changes in the preliminary classification as it finds to be proper, and thereafter shall make its final classification. The final results of the classification effort will be by formal written order which must include a statement of findings of fact on the basis of which the order is made, and must include a map showing the classifications or reclassifications. The original of the order shall be filed with the county clerk of the county, who shall maintain it available for public inspection. A copy of the order certified by the secretary of the committee shall be sent to the State Board of Forestry.
- **How can a landowner appeal the findings of the Classification Committee?** Any owner of land classified under ORS 526.328 or 526.340 and who is aggrieved by the classification may, within 30 days after the date of the order making the classification, appeal to the circuit court for the county. The appeal shall be taken by serving the notice of appeal on the secretary of the committee and by filing such a notice with the county clerk.