



EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 19-01

**ESTABLISHING THE GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL ON WILDFIRE
RESPONSE**

Wildfires have increased in intensity and severity in the past decade, threatening our safety, health, water security, economic security, environment, and well-being. Proactive, ecologically responsible forest treatments in high-risk areas are critical to mitigating catastrophic wildfire risk and related costs to communities, economies, and the environment.

In Oregon, when wildfire does occur, initial attack has successfully held more than 95% of fires to small acreage. The ability to detect a fire when it sparks and address it is a critical component for mitigating the effects of wildfire season each year. With advancement in technology, there may be newer methods to improve our initial attack responses.

Still, there will be times a wildfire starts in too remote a location, or spreads too quickly, and a major wildfire will occur. There are numerous federal, state, and local agencies that coordinate to fight fires. Key federal agencies include the United States Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Park Service, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Within the state, the Oregon Department of Forestry responds using its own resources, as well as relying on agreements with forest landowners, private contractors, partner states and Canadian provinces, and the Oregon National Guard. The Oregon State Fire Marshal also organizes and sends Incident Management Teams (comprised of employees from fire agencies around the state) when certain conditions are met and the Governor issues a declaration pursuant to the Emergency Conflagration Act (ORS 476.510 *et seq.*). Wildfire suppression efforts are funded through a variety of mechanisms including an insurance policy with Lloyd's of London, the Forest Patrol Assessment and Forest Land Protection Fund (paid for in part or in whole, respectively, by private forest landowners), state general fund dollars, and federal emergency dollars.

The type of response an agency or agencies will utilize, as well as the type of equipment and personnel that is deployed on a particular incident, is the product of several factors. The Northwest Coordination Center plays an important role in assisting with interagency resource coordination, logistics support, aviation



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support, and predictive services for all agencies. The equipment owned and managed by agencies within the state—as well as the companies with whom agencies have contracts—also informs these decisions. It may be advantageous for the state to make additional capital investments in fire-fighting equipment and personnel to meet the various geographical and ecological challenges our state's regions can present during wildfire season.

In addition to those lands protected by a federal, state, local, or tribal government, there are also hundreds of thousands of acres in Oregon that are considered “unprotected” because private land owners do not pay taxes for fire coverage. Some of those areas have created Rangeland Fire Protection Associations supported by the Oregon Department of Forestry, but because our fire seasons will get worse, it is important we discuss the costs versus the benefits of allowing portions of Oregon's land to remain under- or unprotected.

We know from the last several wildfire seasons that systems must be in place to protect our citizens from the smoke caused by wildfires. First, Oregonians most vulnerable to dangerous air quality must be quickly identified and appropriate resources must be used to protect them. Second, a sufficient number of smoke-free shelters need to be provided, and all citizens must be properly educated about how to find relief from the smoke. Finally, smoke has had an economic impact on our tourist and agricultural industries, necessitating resilience efforts when air quality remains poor for extended periods of time.

Even after the flames are out, wildfires have a lasting effect on our state's regions and industries. In each instance, the Governor's Regional Solutions Team is prepared to respond—by bringing together local, state, and federal agencies, and by coordinating crucial recovery project efforts, such as the provision of insurance information and Small Business Association loans. Although each wildfire and the region affected have unique characteristics, a systematic approach ensures the right agencies respond efficiently and effectively.

Each wildfire season presents new challenges. Changes in climate—including increased temperatures, changing precipitation patterns, decreased winter snowpack, and increasingly prevalent droughts and heat waves—mean that wildfire



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season is starting earlier, burning hotter, and lasting longer each year. As a result, we must proactively review our systems to determine whether our current models are sustainable, require enhancement, or require a different approach to minimize fire impacts.

NOW, THEREFORE, IT IS HEREBY DIRECTED AND ORDERED:

1. The Governor's Council on Wildfire Response ("Council") is hereby established.
2. The Council shall review Oregon's current model for wildfire prevention, preparedness and response, analyzing whether or not the current model is sustainable given our increasing wildfire risks. Topics to be considered include, but are not limited to:
 - a. Funding for wildfire response;
 - b. Response to fires on protected, under-protected, and unprotected lands;
 - c. Wildfire smoke;
 - d. Assisting communities affected by wildfires;
 - e. Prevention, treatment and cost containment of wildfires.
3. If the Council finds, after a review, that some or all of the current models are not sufficient to ensure Oregon is prepared for increasingly severe wildfire seasons, the Council shall develop recommendations to strengthen, improve, or replace existing systems, and to implement its findings. The recommendations shall be presented to the Governor no later than September 30, 2019.
4. The Council shall consist of no fewer than thirteen members appointed by the Governor, including leaders of rural and urban communities across Oregon who are affected by wildfire, and experts who understand critical issues including the following: health and safety risks posed by wildfire; direct and indirect economic impacts of wildfire; environmental and cultural implications of wildfire; and risks to vital infrastructure, including power, water, labor, and transportation.



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5. Ex-officio members of the Council shall include:
 - a. Two members of the Oregon State Senate, one from the majority party and one from the minority party, designated by the Senate President and Senate Minority Leader, respectively;
 - b. Two members of the Oregon House of Representatives, one from the majority party and one from the minority party, designated by the Speaker of the House and House Minority Leader, respectively;
 - c. The Oregon State Forester or his designee;
 - d. The Oregon State Fire Marshal or his designee;
 - e. A liaison from the Oregon Board of Forestry;
 - f. A representative from the Oregon Health Authority – Public Health Division.

6. The Governor shall also appoint the chair of the Council, who shall provide leadership and direction to the Council. The chair shall establish an agenda, work plan, budget, and timeline for the Council. The chair may appoint and approve the creation of subcommittees of the Council. The chair may, on behalf of the Governor, convene additional advisory committees for purposes of informing Council findings and recommendations. Subcommittees and advisory committees may include members of the Council as well as non-appointed individuals with interest or expertise in the topic being considered.

7. A quorum for the Council meetings shall consist of a majority of the appointed members.

8. The Oregon Department of Forestry shall provide staff support to the Council. All other state agencies shall provide assistance to the Council upon request.

9. The members of the Council shall not receive per diem for their activities as members of the Council, but may be reimbursed for expenses incurred in attending Council business pursuant to ORS 292.495(2), subject to availability of funds.



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10. This order shall remain in effect until the recommendations of the Council are considered and acted upon by the Oregon Legislature, unless the Governor requests that the Council's work continue beyond that time.

Done at Medford, Oregon, this 30th of January, 2019.



Handwritten signature of Kate Brown in blue ink.

Kate Brown
GOVERNOR

ATTEST:

Handwritten signature of Dennis Richardson in green ink.

Dennis Richardson
SECRETARY OF STATE