



KATE BROWN
Governor

May 2, 2019

The Honorable David Bernhardt, Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington DC 20240

Subject: Bureau of Land Management and Oregon Department of Forestry Protection Agreement for Fire Prevention and Suppression on Western Oregon O&C Lands

Dear Secretary Bernhardt:

As Governor of the state of Oregon, I urge you to maintain the important Bureau of Land Management and Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) Protection Agreement for Fire Prevention and Suppression on Western Oregon O&C Lands administered by the BLM.

Oregon's forests are a compilation of land ownerships resulting from historical patterns of settlement and various Congressional actions. Currently, the ODF's Fire Protection program protects and maintains 16 million acres of private and public forest land, 2.3 million of which are administered by the BLM as Oregon and California railroad lands (O&C).

These O&C lands are part of a complete and coordinated wildfire protection system that has functioned successfully for over 100 years and includes fire prevention, fire detection, fire suppression, a readiness organization, support services, and administration.

Because O&C lands are tightly intermingled with high value private timber lands that ODF protects, granting singular agency protection responsibility to ODF remains the most effective and efficient option for wildfire management. Removing O&C lands from the protection system would create over 14,000 miles of jurisdictional boundaries, adding complexity to wildfire protection where we can ill afford it. Over the course of our 2018 fire season, ODF and its partners suppressed more than 1,000 fires and succeeded in containing 95% to less than 10 acres.

While our collaborative and innovative partnerships have proven effective and efficient, burned acreage in 2018 more than doubled the 10-year average. As the state of Oregon will undoubtedly experience more frequent and intense wildfire seasons, leveraging cooperative forest land management strategies has never been more imperative. I impress upon you the importance of maintaining our Agreement for Fire Prevention and Suppression to the safety and economic resiliency of rural communities across the state of Oregon.

Sincerely,


Governor Kate Brown

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