

2024

# Environmental Justice Council: Annual Report



**Oregon  
Department  
of Forestry**

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# AGENCY INTRODUCTION

## Department of Forestry Mission Statement

To serve the people of Oregon by protecting, managing, and promoting stewardship of Oregon's forests to enhance environmental, economic, and community sustainability.

## Department of Forestry Leadership

Cal Mukumoto- Oregon State Forester (resigned effective January 23, 2025; Kate Skinner acting), see [Appendix A](#) for Organizational Chart.

For more than a century, the Board of Forestry and Department of Forestry have been caring for Oregon's forests. The board was established in 1911, along with the positions of state forester and deputy state forester. Together, they were charged with preventing forest fires and coordinating the response when fires did start. This was the start of Oregon's complete and coordinated fire protection system that is still a crucial part of our suppression success today.

The Oregon Board of Forestry is a [seven-member citizen board](#) appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the state Senate. The board is charged with representing the public interest and its primary responsibilities are to:

- Supervise all matters of forest policy within Oregon.
- Appoint the State Forester, who also serves as the director of ODF.
- Adopt rules regulating forest practices.
- Provide general supervision of the State Forester's duties in managing ODF.

The Department of Forestry's work is truly a team effort. The policy and direction established at the headquarters level guides the work happening in the field statewide. The department's headquarters are in Salem, but much of the on-the-groundwork is done by the leadership and staff of ODF's 12 districts with 24 units from Astoria to Wallowa and all the way down to Lakeview and Medford. The dedicated public servants in these offices are the people responsible for fighting fires, assisting landowners and managing our state forestlands every day for their fellow Oregonians.

## Environmental Justice Key Personnel

- Danny Norlander – Forest Climate and Health Analyst, EJC representative
- Megan Frizzell - EJC agency representative for ODF

- Amy Pena- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Strategy Officer
- Christie Shaw – National Fire Plan Coordinator
- Scott Althenhoff- Urban and Community Forestry
- Brittany Oxford- Urban and Community Forestry
- Evan Elderbrock- Urban and Community Forestry, member of the EJC mapping tool workgroup
- Lilah Gonen- Urban and Community Forestry

## Agency Budget and Revenue Sources

The Governor's budget for the Oregon Department of Forestry is \$832.3 million total funds and 1,446 positions, which is a 14.0 percent increase from the 2023-25 Legislatively Approved Budget (LAB). The increase is associated with a \$135.0 million investment into the State Forestry Department Cash Flow Repayment Fund with the intention to adjust the statutory purpose of the fund to act as a large fire cash flow account.

## Agency Programs Relevant to EJ Reporting

- Forest Resources Division
  - Urban and Community Forestry
  - Schroeder Seed Orchard
  - Landscape restoration and resiliency
- State Forests Division
  - Forest management for the "greatest permanent value" to all Oregonians
  - Recreation, Education and Interpretation
- Protection Division
  - Protection from Fire
  - Smoke Management
  - Wildfire prevention and mitigation

# ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

## HIGHLIGHTS

### Urban and Community Forestry Program

The Urban and Community Forestry (UCF) Program centers around advancing equity, well-being, and resilience for all communities in Oregon by promoting investments in trees, management planning, and workforce development.

- The UCF Program received two awards, totaling \$26.6 million from the United States Forest Service (USFS), to stand up two grant programs:
- \$10 million devoted specifically to federally recognized Tribes of Oregon (Tribal Government Subaward Program)
- \$12.5 million to promote urban, community, and Tribal forest investments in underserved communities throughout the state (All-Entities Subaward Program).

The UCF Program coordinated with ODF's Deputy Tribal Liaison and a Tribal Relations Consultant to build relationships with representatives from each of the nine federally recognized Tribes of Oregon and support the proposal submission process for this funding opportunity. The UCF Program provided information sessions and technical assistance to applicants throughout the application process and hired consultants to support applicants with proposal development and grant writing. In 2024, the UCF Program received 94 proposals totaling \$50 million in requests and selected 33 proposals (\$15.5 million) for awards. The UCF program anticipates allocating the remaining funds for the Tribal Government Subaward Program to be awarded in 2025.

- In addition, the UCF Program engaged in the following environmental justice-related activities:
  - Provided \$190,000 State Urban Forest Resiliency grant to support proactive tree care in low income and disadvantaged communities in Southern Oregon.
  - Coordinated with the Department of Land Conservation and Development to establish a \$6.5 million state-funded grant program focused on planning and implementing green infrastructure projects in low-income communities who bare a disproportionate health burden and lack equitable access to environmental benefits, such as trees or parks.

- Supported of the state-mandated environmental justice mapping tool by providing technical expertise to the Environmental Justice Council's Mapping Methodology Working Group.
- Funded student stipends and helped organize the Climate Justice Leadership Program, which supports 15 Latino/a/x high school students in the development of an Emerald Ash Borer response plan for Centro Cultural, a non-profit organization that serves the Latino community in Washington County.

## **Schroeder Seed Orchard**

- With support from funds made available through House Bill 3409, the Schroder Seed Orchard began working on implementing a project for forward looking tree species seed availability. This effort will work to have climate-ready seed in the future. The seed orchard is linked with the Oregon Seed Bank, which has the charge of supporting small landowners and those that are at a disadvantage when purchasing seed and seedlings. This work will continue into the future and will try to support environmental and climate justice efforts.

## **Other EJ highlights**

- Continued to enhance the 20-year Landscape Resiliency Strategy. A core component of the strategy is engagement with the nine federally recognized Tribes in Oregon.
- Continued discussions around opportunities to provide excess seedlings grown to replant state forestlands to help Tribes in their reforestation efforts.

# AGENCY ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE CONSIDERATIONS

## Climate Change and Oregon's Forests

The Oregon Department of Forestry has been committed for over 100 years to preserve and sustainably manage forested ecosystems. The agency considers climate change a major threat to those goals. We have been actively collaborating with agency partners to develop effective policies to help mitigate and adapt to the predicted changes.

Climate change threatens the health and viability of both Oregon's human and ecological communities. The human communities facing the greatest threats are often those that are already vulnerable due to long-standing socioeconomic disparities.

ODF's [Climate Change and Carbon Plan](#) works to position Oregon as a regional leader in climate-smart forestry, including both climate-change mitigation and adaptation. The goals are to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions, increase carbon sequestration (i.e. storage of carbon in trees), and positively benefit climate-impacted and resource-dependent communities.

Additionally, the work of our Urban and Community Forestry Program is critical.

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*The Oregon Board of Forestry and ODF provide national leadership in climate-smart and socially equitable forest policies that promote climate health, resilient forests, community wellbeing, and a viable forest products industry.*

-Climate Change Vision

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# ADDRESS ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE ISSUES (ORS 182.550 SECTION 1)

## Environmental Justice Consideration Process

While some specific programs, like Urban and Community Forestry, do take environmental justice factors into account because of the very clear connection between EJ and their work, there isn't currently an agencywide process to ensure consideration as part of all policy and operational decisions. However, ODF is committed to establishing a policy and process to achieve that objective. The department looks forward to the opportunity to learn and better understand environmental justice factors overall, how those intersect with our work, and how we can most effectively incorporate consideration of those factors into our planning and decision-making processes.

# PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND MEANINGFUL INVOLVEMENT (ORS 182.535 SECTION 2)

*ORS 182.550 Section 2: Increase public participation of individuals and communities affected by agencies' decisions*

## Public Engagement Policy and Processes

### Public Engagement Policy

ODF does not have a current public engagement policy. We have been tracking the need for one for the past few years but haven't had the capacity to fully engage in this work across the agency until more recently. The lessons learned during broader engagement efforts related to strategic planning will be incorporated into this policy, which we will focus on developing during late 2024 and early 2025, in conjunction with the operationalization of the board and department strategic plan (framework adoption scheduled for June 2024).

### Criteria for Public Participation

- The most common occurrence to trigger public participation is rulemaking processes and review of our district-level fire protection budgets, both of which require public hearings. Under Oregon Administrative Rule, we also solicit and consider public comments as part of our state forest management and operational planning processes.
- The Board of Forestry has long incorporated public comment opportunities into its meetings, both on decision items and any other forestry-related topics.
- The State Forests Advisory Committee has broad representation that provides input on implementation issues specifically. This includes a diverse representation of recreation, environmental and forest industry, as well as a Tribal representative, county commissioner, 2 non-affiliated representatives and an OSU extension service representative.

### Level and Quality of Public Participation

The level and quality of public participation depends heavily upon the topic. Some topics are seen as controversial or polarizing and generate a high level of public input—verbally and in writing—to department leadership and staff, as well as the Board of Forestry. The quality of the content varies greatly. The two factors that

contribute the most to content quality are the degree of understanding of the topic and whether the input process is being guided or driven by special or political interests.

### ***Follow-up***

Currently each operational division within the agency has its own process for responding to public input received. As part of the public engagement policy we will be developing in the near future, we will set a base expectation for follow ups to promote consistency and equality in response and allow Oregonians to set reasonable expectations for follow-up engagement with the department.

### ***Targeted Audiences***

Historically, the department has heavily engaged with two key groups of stakeholders: forest products interests (including large and small forestland owners, loggers, mills and others involved with forest products) and environmental/conservation interests. Specific to state forestlands, we also regularly engage with commissioners of the trust land counties that financially benefit from state forests timber harvest and outdoor recreation groups.

The board and department worked with Oregon's Kitchen Table on the broader engagement effort, and OKT created a number of ways for Oregonians to provide input in multiple languages over the course of several months. They started this process with conversations with approximately 40 organizations to learn more about how and where forests were being talked about in Oregon. This ultimately led to more than 4,000 Oregonians sharing their thoughts about Oregon's forests, which is more than usual in both number and diversity.

Link to Community Engagement – Vision for Oregon Forests Executive Summary: <https://www.oregonskitchentable.org/sites/default/files/documents/a-vision-for-oregon-forests.pdf>

# AGENCY ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE IMPACTS (ORS 182.550 SECTION 3)

**ORS 182.550 Section 3:** *Determine the effect of agencies' decisions on environmental justice communities.*

State forests management plans have associated performance measures designed to measure the success of plan goals and strategies in delivering economic, social and environmental benefits to the people of Oregon. The Western Oregon State Forests Management Plan is currently being drafted, along with new performance measures.

# AGENCY ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE PROGRESS (ORS 182.550 SECTION 4)

*ORS 182.550 Section 4: Improve plans to further improve environmental justice in Oregon*

## How is EJ built into agency strategic plans?

As part of the Board of Forestry and Department of Forestry's strategic planning work, we have been making a dedicated effort to engage more broadly with Oregonians, as forests impact the lives of everyone in our state in a variety of ways. The framework of this plan was adopted in June 2024 and includes the establishment of continued broader engagement efforts as a priority body of work. Additionally, there is ongoing conversation on where and how to prioritize strategies related to environmental justice throughout the various goals of the strategic plan to advance the department's efforts to fulfill our statutory duties under ORS 182.545.

## What does your agency need to further develop and implement environmental justice policies at the agency?

ODF would continue to benefit from additional education, understanding, and statewide standards related to environmental justice topics. Helping those inside the department as well as the variety of constituents understand what an environmental justice community is and reducing ingrained bias that may be hindering efforts the department has underway to mitigate impacts is still needed.

Additionally, tools that enable greater participation would be helpful. Providing food, childcare, or stipends for participation in agency efforts would hopefully increase participation. Deepening the pool of individuals that are able to serve on the various committees and work groups that the department has would also provide additional voices to be heard. Recognition of these issues is there, but the mechanisms to achieve them is still lacking and in some cases, a state enterprise-wide solution is needed.

# AGENCY ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE MAPPING TOOL INVOLVEMENT (ORS 182.550 SECTION 5)

**ORS 182.550 Section 5:** *Utilize the environmental justice mapping tool developed under section 12 of this 2022 Act.*

## How is your agency participating in the development of the environmental justice mapping tool?

The Oregon Department of Forestry has a staff member, Evan Elderbrock, sitting on the EJ mapping tool workgroup. Through this group he has:

- Met regularly with representatives from academic institutions (i.e., OSU and PSU) and state agencies to discuss methodological approaches to mapping Environmental Justice Communities in Oregon.
- Evaluated existing EJ mapping tools to identify pros and cons for different methodological approaches.
- Continue to provide input on important considerations for Oregon EJ mapping tool based on my experience as a researcher.

# AGENCY ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE COUNCIL ENGAGEMENT 2024

The Department of Forestry will actively seek advice and guidance from the Environmental Justice Council on key environmental justice topics in Oregon. ODF will use that guidance to:

- Inform its development of a policy and process for incorporating EJ considerations into planning and decision making, and
- Identify actions the department can incorporate into its operational planning to help address the EJ issues that are within our scope and authority.

# AGENCY ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE COUNCIL LEGISLATION CITATIONS

**HB 3630 (2023):** Directs the State Department of Energy to establish program to provide assistance related to energy projects and activities to environmental justice communities. As many of the energy projects involve state lands or at minimum involve energy transmission lines through forests, the department has been working closely with the Department of Energy through the creation of legislation through to the implementation of energy projects on the landscape.



# AGENCY MEANINGFUL ENGAGEMENT RELATED LEGISLATION

**HB 3173 (2023):** Established a Task Force on Tribal Consultation and specified task force membership. The Oregon Department of Forestry regularly engages with the nine Federally recognized Tribes of Oregon. From wildfire protection to culturally important sites on state forestlands, ODF works closely with Tribes to maintain Tribal sovereignty while balancing the cultural and physical needs of land managers. HB 3173 creates a Tribal Engagement Task Force that, at minimum, ODF will be actively involved in working to identify and clarify the requirements of state agencies to engage in Tribal consultation. ODF may also be present as a representative State agency on the Task Force. ODF will be working closely with the Tribes and other agencies to refine and standardize the engagement process that all agencies will undertake.

**HB 3293 (2021):** Authorized the provider of water project support to make support available to local organizations and local governments for the purpose of developing local community engagement plans for water projects. In shaping these water projects, the bill required that community engagement plans supported by provider utilize goals and approaches for increased participation of disproportionately impacted communities in decisions related to identification, scoping, design, and implementation of water projects. The department has been working with the Department of Environmental Quality, Oregon Business Development Department, Department of Fish and Wildlife, Oregon Health Authority, Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, and the Water Resources Department to produce sustainable watershed projects, particularly in the North Coast region and on state forestlands.

## LOOKING AHEAD

Over the last few years, the department has undertaken big changes to our core business functions and we have been adjusting operationally and administratively to adapt to the seismic shifts in forest practices, wildfire challenges, forest health and climate change impacts. More and more, we're finding ourselves at the center of multi-year recovery efforts and increasingly involved in the communities we protect in ways we haven't before. As we manage this change and as communities continue to look to us for leadership, we have an opportunity to recommit ourselves to our diversity, equity, and inclusion values. This includes gaining a better understanding of our role in promoting and supporting environmental justice efforts and then stepping fully into that role.

We anticipate that there will be many conversations across the agencies' work areas on what forestry in Oregon is and should be moving forward in a changed and changing climate that impact the lives of all Oregonians. What does wildfire look like in the future, what will the forests of the future be like, what are the changes to the regulatory framework that have taken place and what will be needed in the future. All of these need to include environmental justice voices and the department will make efforts to include them.



# APPENDIX B

## Definitions

### ***Environmental Justice (ORS 182.535 Section 3)***

“Environmental justice” means the equal protection from environmental and health risks, fair treatment and meaningful involvement in decision making of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, immigration status, income or other identities with respect to the development, implementation and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies that affect the environment in which people live, work, learn and practice spirituality and culture.

### ***Environmental Justice Community (ORS 182.535 Section 4)***

“Environmental justice community” includes communities of color, communities experiencing lower incomes, communities experiencing health inequities, tribal communities, rural communities, remote communities, coastal communities, communities with limited infrastructure and other communities traditionally underrepresented in public processes and adversely harmed by environmental and health hazards, including seniors, youth and persons with disabilities.

### ***Meaningful Involvement (ORS 182.535 Section 7)***

“Meaningful involvement” means:

- (a) Members of vulnerable populations have appropriate opportunities to participate in decisions about a proposed activity that will affect their environment or health;
- (b) Public involvement can influence a decision maker’s decision;
- (c) The concerns of all participants involved are considered in the decision-making process; and
- (d) Decision makers seek out and facilitate the involvement of members of vulnerable populations

### ***Environmental Burdens (ORS 182.535 Section 2)***

“Environmental burden” means the environmental and health risks to communities caused by the combined historic, current and projected future effects of:

- (a) Exposure to conventional pollution and toxic hazards in the air or in or on water or land;

- (b) Adverse environmental conditions caused or made worse by other contamination or pollution; and
- (c) Changes in the environment resulting from climate change, such as water insecurity, drought, flooding, wildfire, smoke and other air pollution, extreme heat, loss of traditional cultural resources or foods, ocean acidification, sea-level rise and increases in infectious disease.

# APPENDIX C

## House Bill 4077 (2022)

Legislation establishing the Environmental Justice Council, the Council's responsibility to develop an environmental justice mapping tool, develop a biannual report to the Governor, and the requirement for natural resource agencies to submit an annual report to the Environmental Justice Council.

## Senate Bill 420 (2007)

Legislation establishing the Environmental Justice Task Force, the predecessor for the Environmental Justice Council. It also includes requirements for the Task Force to submit biannual reports to the Governor and the requirement for natural resource agencies to submit an annual report to the Environmental Justice Task Force.

## ORS 182.550 Reports by natural resource agencies

All directors of natural resource agencies, and other agency directors as the Governor may designate, shall report annually to the Environmental Justice Task Force and to the Governor on the results of the agencies' efforts to:

1. Address environmental justice issues;
2. Increase public participation of individuals and communities affected by agencies' decisions;
3. Determine the effect of the agencies' decisions on environmental justice communities;
4. Improve plans to further the progress of environmental justice in Oregon; and
5. Utilize the environmental justice mapping tool developed under section 12 of this 2022 Act.