



**OREGON FOREST &  
INDUSTRIES COUNCIL**  
SUSTAINABILITY. SCIENCE. INNOVATION. GROWTH.



April 25, 2018 Testimony to Board of Forestry  
Re: ODF 2019-2021 Agency Initiative

My name is Jim James, Executive Director Oregon Small Woodlands Association. I am speaking today for the private forest landowner and operator community.

Let me start by saying the Oregon Department of Forestry's approach to protecting private, state, county, and westside BLM forests in Oregon with its militia concept and operator/landowner partnerships is the best in the county. It can be very effective in keeping fires small providing adequate staff is available. However, issues associated with federal forest fire policies create some big challenges that need to be addressed when they conflict with protecting private forests from fire. How to staff for fire season and why some federal forest fires in Oregon get so large both need to be addressed.

With the most recent fire seasons, no one doubts the Department of Forestry needs some additional staffing during fire season to meet its obligations to Oregon forest owners who significantly fund fire-fighting expenses, contribute in-kind investments in fire-fighting, and suffer the natural resource losses when fires occur. Oregon forest owners pay more fire-fighting expenses, by far, than any other state in the Union.

The landowner/operator community appreciates the departments outreach to get support for their plans to address their recent staffing shortfall during fire season. Not having access to a third ODF Fire Incident Management Team during fire season is not acceptable. At this time, we can support some but not all of the departments original ideas and look forward to working with the department to find solutions that provide the department with adequate staffing to meet its obligations without increasing landowner costs or risks. All options to increase staff during fire season must be evaluated. We support the concept that all Oregonians will benefit from these changes and needed additional funding must come from the general fund.

This is an important issue for both the department and the landowner/operator community. While we fully respect the immediacy of the department's own board and budget timelines, the fire program is a priority for land owners, and one we're not willing to shortchange to meet process deadlines. We look forward to engaging with the department once we have identified workable solutions we can support. Thank you to the department for the open and candid discussions. I believe there are solutions we can find and support.

Jim James, OSWA Executive Director  
Kristina McNitt, OF&IC President  
Jim Geisinger, AOL Executive Vice President