



Deschutes County Rural
Fire Protection District #2

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October 31, 2017

Oregon Smoke Management Review Committee
2600 State Street
Salem, Oregon 97310

Smoke Management Review Committee,

The Deschutes County Rural Fire Protection District #2 is responsible for emergency services to the area immediately surrounding the City of Bend. Over the years our fire district has faced a number of wildfires including the Awbrey Hall and Skeleton fires in the 1990s. Those fires resulted in the loss of over thirty homes. Since those losses, agencies and homeowners in the Bend area have focused on creating defensible space to reduce the effects of catastrophic fires.

Community Wildfire Protection Plans have been instituted to coordinate efforts to reduce fuels on federal, state, and private lands. An important part of these plans has been to reduce combustible fuels by all means possible. In addition to mechanical methods, prescribed fires have been an important tool in reducing hazardous fuels. The effectiveness of these procedures have resulted in reduced risks as shown by the fact that since the Skeleton Fire no large property losses have been incurred in our area. The Milli, Pole Creek and Two Bulls fires have shown that when fuels have been treated it aids in reducing the severity of fires and helps to control their spread. The use of prescribed fires, however, has been limited by the potential of smoke intrusions into the urban area of Bend. No one appreciates smoke, but the alternatives were revealed by the recent Santa Rosa, CA. fires.

It is for these reasons that the Board of Directors of the Deschutes County Rural Fire Protection District #2 supports changes to the Oregon Smoke Management Plan that would allow increased use of prescribed fire to reduce fuel loading in our forests. Specifically we support recommendations made by the Deschutes Collaborative Forest Project which include:

- Incorporate language that reflects differences between dry and wet forests and their respective fire regimes.
- Align Oregon's smoke policy with EPA's empirically-based 24-hour air quality standard.
- Prioritize high-risk/high-value treatment areas, such as Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) zones, with maximum flexibility and opportunity to implement prescribed fire.
- Develop and implement a public health strategy to protect people from short-duration prescribed fire smoke.

We are hopeful that changes to the Oregon Smoke Management plan are made and that our forests are returned to a safer and healthier condition. We are also hopeful that our community is no longer threatened every summer from wildland fires and the resulting hazardous smoke during peak tourist season.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Ray Miao".

Ray Miao

President

Deschutes County Rural Fire Protection District #2