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Oregon Smoke Management Review Committee
2600 State Street
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To the Oregon Smoke Management Review Committee:

We are writing to offer our support for the **increased use of safe, effective prescribed burning** in promoting the goals of sustainable forest management in Oregon. The 2017 fire season now joins a long list of years with large, uncharacteristic wildfires driven by accumulated and contiguous fuels coupled with ever lengthening fire seasons. Prescribed burning in the spring and fall shoulder seasons allows landowners to significantly reduce such fire risk during the heart of the fire season – wildfires that put substantial amounts of smoke into our human population centers and for long periods of time. Prescribed fire produces less smoke with fewer particulates and is of shorter duration given our ability to regulate fire behavior (fuel arrangement and moisture content, ignition patterns, and timing), as well as to choose weather patterns for smoke dispersal. The Milli Fire near Sisters showed the importance of active management of fuels, including prescribed fire, as the most effective tool we have available to reduce wildfire risk to our communities. The Eagle Creek Fire in the Gorge showed the folly of waiting for wildfire to do the fuel reduction work for us.

Prescribed fire is a small-smoke “vaccination” against future ‘on-your-back-for-a-week’ smoke events – or for a month if you live in Ashland or Medford. Just because the vaccination can be regulated but the illness (wildfire) cannot doesn’t logically mean that we limit the vaccination. Indeed, it typically prompts us to incentivize the vaccination of a population (the landscape) to reduce the susceptibility to future disease (uncharacteristic wildfire and associated smoke). The Oregon Smoke Management Review Committee needs to consider this larger perspective in their deliberations. Increasing regulation of prescribed fire will **not** reduce smoke impacts on our human communities; it only clarifies the “accounting” of it. The question becomes: how and when do we want our smoke?

We need meaningful reforms to Oregon’s smoke management rules in order to protect our resources and our communities from large, uncharacteristic wildfire and its smoke. Increased use of prescribed fire is a major part of that reform, and we need it soon. The solution should be comprehensive and may need to challenge current state and federal policy, but this is a window of opportunity to make fundamental changes. We ask that you carefully consider the ideas and strategies being offered to improve forest resilience to wildland fire (as well as climate change and other stressors) by increasing the allowed use of prescribed fire for site preparation and intermediate stand-management fuels and restoration treatments. We can do work that meaningfully while still protecting air quality and community health in the long run.

Respectfully,

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