

# Ochoco Lumber Company

Manufacturers of Ponderosa Pine

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

October 26, 2017

To the Oregon Smoke Management Review Committee:

On behalf of Ochoco Lumber Company, we would like to voice our support for the increased use of safe and effective prescribed burning in Central Oregon's forests. We have learned that prescribed burning under controlled conditions in the spring and fall allows the Forest Service to reduce the risk of larger uncontrolled fires during the heat of the summer. This summer's Milli Fire near Sisters once again demonstrated the efficacy of thinning followed by prescribed fire as the most effective tool we have available to reduce wildfire risk to our communities and the people that live, work, and play in our forests; forests that are the backbone of our economy and our way of life.

We know that in order to increase the use of prescribed fire we need meaningful reforms to Oregon's smoke management rules. The recommendations outlined in the attached letter from the Deschutes Collaborative Forest Project represent a viable and holistic strategy that would enable greater use of prescribed fire to counter the trend towards larger and increasingly severe wildfires, and the serious social, economic, and ecological impacts those wildfires cause in our forests and communities.

While we recognize that increased prescribed fire may lead to an increase in short-term smoke impacts in our communities, we also recognize the need to fight wildfires before they happen. It's important to remember that there is no smoke-free option to living in central Oregon. The question is: are we applying prescribed fire strategically in the forests around our communities to reduce the likelihood of severe wildfires (and their smoke) that last for weeks in the summer and have far-reaching negative consequences on public health, local economies, and the long-term resilience of our forests.

Ultimately, we support a more holistic solution to prescribed fire and smoke management than what is currently provided by state policy. We believe that the short-term impacts of prescribed fire will be far less than the impacts of wildfire. For while we may be reducing near-term exposure to smoke by limiting prescribed fire now, it comes at the expense of future Oregonians who will face increasingly severe wildfires and wildfire smoke. We ask that you carefully consider strategies to increase the use of prescribed fire while protecting air quality and the health of our communities in the long run.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stuart J. Shelk Jr.", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Stuart J Shelk Jr



**DESCHUTES**  
COLLABORATIVE  
**FOREST PROJECT**

## **WE COUNT ON THE FOREST**

### **Now the Forest is Counting on Us**

After nearly a century of aggressively fighting to keep fire out, our forests are overly-dense and in need of restoration, like thinning and controlled burning (also known as prescribed fire), to reduce the risk posed by the out-of-control wildfires that we experienced this summer. Unfortunately, at our current pace, there is more than 25 years' worth of restoration needed in the forest just to catch up.

### **Our Forests Need Fire**

Historically (prior to the late 1800's), low-intensity fires burning every 5 to 25 years kept our mid and lower elevation forests healthy for millennia. In fact, this kind of mild fire is essential for certain plants and wildlife, for cycling nutrients, and for sustaining a healthy forest ecosystem. We can safely and effectively reintroduce "good fire" with controlled burning.

### **Controlled Burning: An Essential Tool**

Controlled burns are conducted by professionals applying decades of practical and scientific knowledge, and cutting-edge fire and smoke modeling tools. Research has shown that thinning followed by controlled burning is the best way to make our forests more resilient, create homes for a diversity of wildlife, and make our communities safer in the face of future wildfire.

### **Controlled Burning Works**

Recent wildfires demonstrate what science has shown: controlled burning is the most effective tool at our disposal to reduce the intensity and severity of future wildfires. Thanks to strategic use of prescribed fire, firefighters could safely and effectively use areas treated prior to the Milli Fire to slow the spread of the wildfire, protect Sisters and surrounding private property, and sustain the many benefits our forests provide. However, we need to be doing a lot more of it to make a difference across Central Oregon.

### **Please Excuse Our Smoke**

Controlled burns, which are primarily conducted in spring and fall, are carefully planned and implemented under prescribed conditions of temperature, wind, and humidity. This ensures they can be safely controlled and reduces the likelihood that smoke will blow into nearby communities. Nonetheless, some smoke in the air for short-durations is inevitable. And while inconvenient, it is important to realize that the duration and amount of smoke is significantly less than during large wildfire events, as the accompanying graph shows. All while helping ensure our forests are healthier and communities safer.

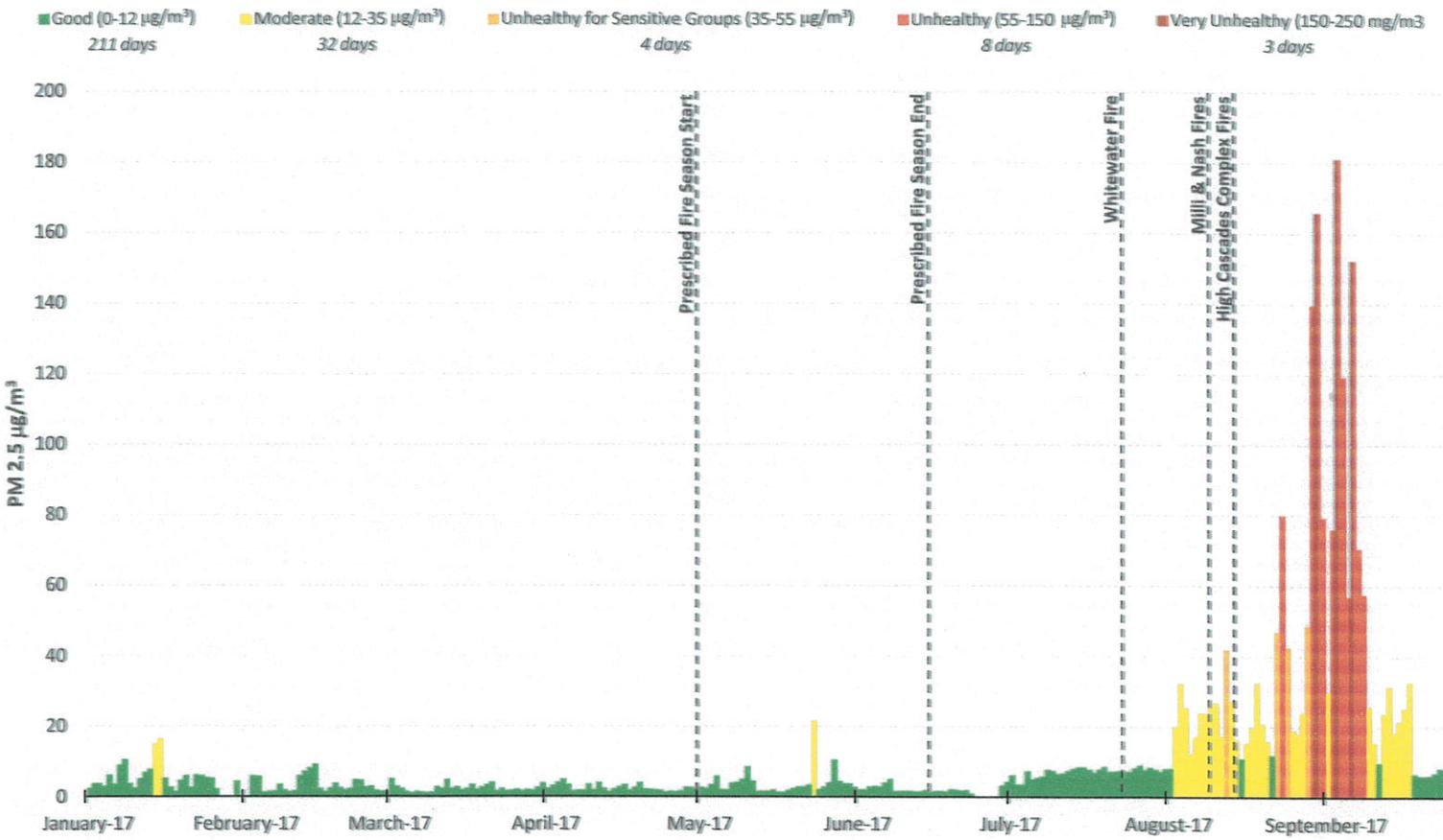
## **WHAT YOU CAN DO**

Current state policy regulating smoke from controlled burns impose significant barriers that greatly impede our use of this essential tool. We are building a coalition of local leaders and organizations advocating for smarter regulations that will enable increased use of prescribed fire. Please consider sending a letter voicing your support for more use of controlled burning. Do your part to help make our forests healthier and more resilient and keep our communities safer now and for future generations.

**THANK YOU**

## 2017 City of Bend Air Quality

(as measured by 24-hour average PM 2.5  $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$  concentrations)



Data Source: Environmental Protection Agency AirNow Tech