

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

October 17, 2017

To the Oregon Smoke Management Review Committee:

On behalf of the Upper Deschutes River Coalition, we would like to voice our support for the increased use of safe and effective prescribed burning in Central Oregon's forest. 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.

And 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,
Steve and Linda Pedersen

