

October 22, 2021

To: State Forester Public Panel
Oregon Department of Forestry

Re: Ms. Tere O'Rourke's application for Oregon State Forester

Dear Panel Members,

I write in support of Ms. Tere O'Rourke's selection to be Oregon's next State Forester. She will make a knowledgeable, experienced, compassionate, effective leader for the Oregon Department of Forestry.

For 12 years, I was Senator Jeff Merkley's Southern Oregon Field Representative responsible for the seven counties in southwest Oregon. This included Klamath County during Ms. O'Rourke's tenure as Klamath Area Manager for the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation. As everyone knows, the water wars in Klamath County have persisted for over 40 years and the USBOR is in the center of the storm. During Ms. O'Rourke's year in leadership in Klamath, she handled herself, her constituents, the local elected officials, tribes, and all other interested parties with respect and was always responsive and communicative even when the news was difficult to deliver.

Ms. O'Rourke is an excellent communicator and a highly experienced manager. She understands forestry from her education and numerous job assignments on national forests. Her work on the Oregon Coast with NMFS has broadened her understanding of endangered species as well as honed her already impressive skills of working with challenging and conflicting demands between people and natural resources. She understands setting priorities and can get things accomplished while multi-tasking among numerous, and often conflicting, projects.

Ms. O'Rourke has experience in agency management that will prove invaluable at ODF. She will be an effective leader capable of addressing personnel and policy conflicts with an honest, compassionate, direct, and fair approach.

I highly recommend Tere O'Rourke for State Forester for Oregon. Please give her your full and fair consideration.

Sincerely,



Amy Ambein
804 Roca St.
Ashland, Oregon 97520
541-601-2395 cell

Oregon Board of Forestry Virtual Special Public Meeting on October 29, 2021

State Forester Selection Decision Item

Submitted: Mon 10/25/2021 1:42 PM

Dear Oregon Board of Forestry members,

I write today in response to reviewing the candidates for State Forester.

The agency is at critical juncture in our history – Increasing fire seasons with its complexities of finances, relationships, and Incident Management Team staffing, investment in the Federal Forest Restoration (FFR) program working to increase the pace and scale of restoration activities in Oregon’s federal forests, potential Habitat Conservation Plans on both State and private forestlands, and the recent faith the Oregon Legislature has placed in ODF by significant investments in ODF capacity. We need a leader that can trust in good people doing good work, providing support and direction for our end goals.

Tere O’Rourke has mostly federal experience, and in my opinion, relatively narrowly focused experience. Her interview was fine, but nothing impressive.

Jim Paul held high level leadership positions at DSL relating to the Elliott State Forest from 2010 until his questionable departure in 2018. During this time, Jim was directly responsible for demanding the Elliott produce more revenue and volume than the Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) being developed by ODF. When federal agencies (NOAA/NMFS) refused to depart from complex riparian strategies, Jim and DSL recommended the State Land Board instead sell the forest – the easy way out. That process was nearly completed before the State Land Board in May, 2017 rejected the full priced offer (Lone Rock, Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians, the Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw Indians) and instead retained the property in State ownership.

Is it a coincidence Director Paul left DSL 8 months later, after a 22-year career in forestry/natural resources to work at Corrections? Many people believe the Land Board moved in a different direction and needed a leader that could move forward with a challenging process of solving the Elliott conundrum, certainly not the incumbent. Candidate Paul mentioned in his public interview about his work on the Elliott and a challenging situation; the decision to sell Oregon’s first state forest was the easy way out – working with various stakeholders to retain the forest as a public good while sustainable harvesting and contributing to the CSF was not only possible, it was the trajectory ten years ago. Based on decisions made in the past by DSL under Director Paul’s leadership, feel he is a poor choice for Oregon’s State Forester.

Cal Mukumoto has varied and extensive experience in work and community development. His impressive background includes management consultation on complex issues like ODF faces now. ODF would benefit from a person of Cal’s caliber who can relate and communicate to the board, to lawmakers, and all stakeholders. I believe Cal’s experience on the Board of Forestry and numerous other boards dealing with complex issues will serve him well as State Forester, and is the top choice to lead ODF in the future.

Anonymous ODF Employee

Tere O'Rourke,
Candidate for Oregon State Forester
By Ken Ballard, retired Forest Service Representative, Siuslaw National Forest

I worked with Tere O'Rourke from when she started on the Siuslaw National Forest as Natural Resources Staff Officer (2016) until my retirement in April of 2018.

LEADERSHIP, SUPERVISORY AND MANAGEMENT SKILLS:

Tere is an inspiring leader, she works hard to be inclusive and empowering of all the employees who work under her. She values their input and uses it to help her with making decisions. She is able to do this without stepping on the employees supervisor's toes.

She inherited a dysfunctional Natural Resources (NR) Staff when she came to the Siuslaw. Through team building training and communication skills training and requiring the Staff and their employees to apply the skills learned at these training's she was able to rebuild the NR Staff into a functional group that was accomplishing the goals place before them in a timely manner.

As a supervisor she held the NR Staff accountable for their actions and inaction. An example: Some of the NR Staff were not submitting their input for NEPA planning documents in the time frame required by the Forest Planner. After Tere discussed this issue with Staff members, their input was submitted in a timely manner.

Tere had an open door policy on the Siuslaw. She wanted all of the employees who worked under her to feel free to come to her with issues to discuss. She set up her office so that it was a comfortable place to meet and discuss issues, projects and do planning. Her office was set up in an open plan with the desk against a side wall and there was a meeting area with couch and chairs.

Tere expected the NR Staff to put personal issues aside and work together as a team. This was a long road for the NR Staff, but the payoffs were worth the effort they put in. By the time I retired the NR Staff was able to sit together as a group and work through problems without one of them becoming an obstructionist.

Under Tere's direction the NR Staff developed three day seminar to address problems that were developing between the Timber program and the Wildlife program. This was a forest wide seminar, held offsite, for district personal in the wildlife, fisheries and watershed, and timber programs. Each program manger gave a short talk on the NEPA requirements for their program area. Then there was a panel discussion on how all the different parts came together to produce NEPA documents, the analysis and resulting timber sales for the landscape covered by the NEPA document. The attendees were then broke up into interdisciplinary groups to have discussions about the issues that were important to each attendee. The group discussions were facilitated by the NR Staff program managers. The groups then gave a short presentation to the rest of the attendees, summarizing their important issues. I feel a better understanding of the challenges that each program area faced in this process was understood by the attendees. One of the results of this seminar was the adding of developing more ungulate habitat as part of the Forest's restoration projects. This was one of the stated goals in the NEPA documents, but had not received the attention that other species had.

NATURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT SKILLS:

The duties of the State Forester, as stated in ORS 526.041 and the Oregon Secretary of State Administrative Rules 629-35-0020 and 629-35-0030, require the State Forester to be a land manager and a regulatory official. Tere's 30 years of experience working for a federal land management agency, several federal natural resource regulatory agencies gives her a unique set of skills that will help her to fulfill the job requirements of the State Forester.

Under Tere's leadership, the Siuslaw National Forest was able to meet targets assigned by the Regional Forester for timber harvest while protecting, maintaining and enhancing wildlife habitats; and protecting soil, air and water.

Tere used her knowledge and understanding of the Northwest Forest Plan, the Endangered Species Act, Clean Water Act and the National Environmental Policy Act to explain how they applied to the timber harvest we were doing on the Siuslaw National Forest.

Tere was a member of the Willamette National Forest's type 3 Fire Management Team while she worked on the Siuslaw National Forest.

Oregon Board of Forestry Virtual Special Public Meeting on October 29, 2021

State Forester Selection Decision Item

Submitted: Mon 10/25/2021 1:47 PM

Dear Board of Forestry Members,

I am writing to recommend Tere O'Rourke for the position of Oregon State Forestry.

It has been my honor to work with Ms. O'Rourke in a professional capacity on complex forest resource issues.

If hired, she would bring an expansive depth of natural resource and forestry regulatory knowledge. In addition, she is a big picture, futuristic thinker who has outstanding leadership skills, grows collaborative partnerships, and creates diverse and inclusive workplaces.

These attributes, together with over thirty years of experience working on difficult and challenging natural resource issues are the very skills the Oregon Department of Forestry needs in its next leader to aggressively address the ongoing catastrophic wildfire situation and support strong reforestation initiatives.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Sincerely,

Kristen Bonanno, JD, MPA

Oregon Board of Forestry Virtual Special Public Meeting on October 29, 2021

State Forester Selection Decision Item

Submitted: Mon 10/25/2021 4:03 PM

To: Chairman Jim Kelly, and members of the Oregon Board of Forestry

RE: Public input on “what aspects of the skills, attributes, and qualifications are key for the next state forester”

What are the major challenges to the next State Forester? may be the question to be asked first. Climate change is at the top of the list, including wildfire response and prevention, climate smart forest management, and dealing with the concept of “greatest permanent value” in light of the threats of climate change. Drought, issues of adequate water for drinking, agriculture, and aquatic species, tree and other plant and wildlife migration issues, all probably also fit under the broad definition of dealing with climate change. Another major challenge is optimizing the staffing, funding, and organization of the Department of Forestry, with historic issues of underfunding, recent losses of experienced science staff, etc. A third area is dealing with our failure to meet the requirements of the Clean Water Act, and defining how ODF will work with Federal Agencies and DEQ to both meet the CWA and protect our waters in general.

Skills, attributes, qualifications most important for these challenges:

Intelligence!!!!

A strong science background, with respect for science, including a commitment to stay abreast of new studies which may inform changes in forest management in general and management for fire specifically .

An appreciation of the Climate Change emergency situation in Oregon, with a commitment to keep this front and center in forest management decisions.

Experience in both forestry and resource management. Preferably this would include hands on felling of trees etc as well as experience in planning and management. Experience in habitat conservation plan development and implementation is also highly relevant.

Experience in teamwork, team building. The ability to be a leader, the buck stops here leader, while having the respect and humility to work with teams which include different areas of expertise, different levels of training, listening and acknowledging when others may know more about a specific issue.

Related to above, the ability to delegate responsibility well.

Experience working with federal agencies, to recognize and acknowledge common goals. And especially experience with the Clean Water Act, hopefully with the ability to see it not as an annoyance, but how meeting it helps protect all the beneficial uses of our state waters. AGENDA ITEM

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Willingness and appropriate scientific background to work closely with our Department of Environmental Quality to optimize forest practices in the interest of all Oregonians.

Experience in writing for the public, ability to communicate to Oregonians what ODF is doing and why.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide input. Our new State Forester's skills and experience and attributes will have a major impact on Oregon over the next years.

Respectfully,

Candace Bonner, small woodlands owner, Corbett, OR

Joan Zuber, small woodlands owner, Molalla, OR

Susan Hansen, small woodlands owner, Molalla, OR

Randy Hironimus, small woodlands owner, Molalla, OR

Kathy Blackney, small woodlands owner, Corbett, OR

Oregon Board of Forestry Virtual Special Public Meeting on October 29, 2021

State Forester Selection Decision Item

Submitted: Thu 10/21/2021 8:08 AM

I had the opportunity to watch the Q&A with the final candidates for State Forester and was impressed with all three individuals.

From my 28 year tenure with ODF, which included the positions of NW Oregon Area Director and Division Chief for State Forests, I had the opportunity to work with two of the finalists, Jim and Cal. I would like to offer my perspective on both individuals.

Jim is an experienced manager with excellent process literacy about State Government. Jim is very familiar with the policy and technical aspects of most of the issues that currently face the Board and the Department.

Cal is a very personable and knowledgeable individual with excellent experience to handle this job. Cal is not as well versed on the current ODF issues but is an excellent "big picture" thinker (and less concerned about process). He would relate very well with ODF Staff and has the personality to build strong relationships with legislators and key stakeholders.

Thanks for the opportunity to comment. Good luck with your decision.

Mike Bordelon (retired)

Silverton, Oregon

Oregon Board of Forestry Virtual Special Public Meeting on October 29, 2021

State Forester Selection Decision Item

Submitted: Tue 10/26/2021 7:19 PM

Hello,

I wanted to submit my support for Therese O'Rourke.

She was my manager when we both worked at the USACE regulatory branch and she is one of the best supervisors I have had in my career. She truly cares about all her staff and advocates for them and at the same time she also challenges your skillset when she sees potential in you.

She challenged me to work on my weaknesses such as public speaking by presenting opportunities for me to present more in front of audiences. She also gave me the opportunity to work on larger more complex projects with her support to strengthen my skillsets. Because of her and the opportunities she presented to me, I was able to excel in my career significantly, learning a lot under her guidance.

Additionally, she focuses on collaboration not only internally but with our state partners such as the regional water control board and California fish and game. She spearheaded quarterly meetings, having us all interact a lot more fluidly and get on the same page on complex priority projects.

Her knowledge and drive is exceptional and I believe that she would be a perfect fit for the State Forester position.

Thanks!

Lanika Cervantes

cerva019@gmail.com

Oregon Board of Forestry Virtual Special Public Meeting on October 29, 2021

State Forester Selection Decision Item

Submitted: Mon 10/25/2021 5:51 AM

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input to this important selection. Due to prior commitments last Wednesday, I was not able to see the three candidates ‘live’ in their presentations. I also cannot attend the meeting of the 29th, so thank you for the opportunity to provide input via email.

This is a very important selection for the board and ODF. I have had a number of opportunities to see ODF ‘up close’ over the past few years as our neighborhood on the Northern Oregon Coast has sought to protect our watershed from a potential timber sale and clear cut.

Prior to my retirement, I ran one of the largest software firms in Oregon. Selections like this, while not everyday, are something I am very familiar with. Based on my experience and after reading the resumes/cover letters of the candidates, here are three thoughts and a summary:

The first priority is to hire a strong executive. There are numerous political, economic, financial and scientific cross currents facing ODF. It is going to be impossible to find a candidate with strong credentials across all of these factors buffeting ODF. The new State Forester should rise above the detail and be a strong leader, providing leadership guidance to a team that is, at the management level, skilled in the disciplines necessary for successfully navigating these strong currents. Look for someone that is a proven leader, not someone that will grow into the job. In my estimation, you don’t have time for that.

Second, find an articulate spokesperson for ODF. Strong communication skills will be necessary in dealing with the powerful stakeholders that have input into Oregon’s forestry decisions. Those individuals that the State Forester interacts with are skilled communicators. The new leader of ODF must stand toe-to-toe with these individuals, in both public and private settings.

Third, find someone trained outside of Oregon. Viewing from afar as a voter and taxpayer, our state does not have a strong track record of competent management across its departments and executive structures. Hiring the product of one of the current state agencies, in my estimation, is a negative because state executives appear to be learning bad habits. Hiring a new State Forester provides an opportunity to bring in someone with ‘outside’ experience, something that is desperately needed in the State and at ODF.

Finally, if your three candidates do not live up to all three of the above factors, don’t settle for ‘the best of a bad lot’. Reset the direction of the search team and find a candidate that can immediately step into the State Forester position and not be intimidated by the work to be done. Yes, there are immediate challenges, but things will get tougher. Make this a long term hire.

Thank you for your considerations.

Jay S. Haladay
Friends of Hug Point

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Oregon Board of Forestry Virtual Special Public Meeting on October 29, 2021

State Forester Selection Decision Item

Submitted: Fri 10/22/2021 10:24 AM

I listened to the public session where people asked eight questions for the three finalists, and my choice for the Chief Forester for the Department of Forestry is Jim Paul. He was the only candidate to mention that the forest paradigm has shifted within the last 20-30 years to one of better ecological forest management in light of global warming, and he is supportive of the HCP currently going through the NEPA process. His answers to the questions were reasoned and articulate. He knows first hand the challenges he faces in managing state forest lands for conservation, recreation, and timber production.

Sincerely,
Greg Jacob
Environmental representative, State Forest Advisory Committee

Oregon Board of Forestry Virtual Special Public Meeting on October 29, 2021
State Forester Selection Decision Item

Submitted: Fri 10/22/2021 1:08 PM

Greetings,

I would like to advocate for Tere O'Rourke in her bid for State Forester. I once worked for her on a province-wide Southern California Forest Service planning team involving four National Forests. Tere proved herself to be an outstanding team builder and collaborator in working with the interests of the four National Forests as well as interested publics. She had great energy and drive.

Please give her application serious consideration.

Sincerely,
James Turner
Forest Planner (retired)
Los Padres National Forest

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