

STAFF REPORT

Agenda Item No.:	2
Work Plan:	Forest Resources Division
Topic:	Board of Forestry Updates
Presentation Title:	Committee for Family Forestlands Annual Report
Date of Presentation:	September 6, 2023
Contact Information:	Wendy Gerlach CFF Chair wendy@wgerlachlaw.com . Mike Kroon, Forest Resources Deputy Chief 503-400-4815 mike.e.kroon@odf.oregon.gov

SUMMARY

The purpose of this agenda item is to provide a report on the Committee for Family Forestlands (CFF), discuss progress on key issues, and make recommendations on policy topics affecting family forestland.

CONTEXT

The CFF, a standing committee of the Oregon Board of Forestry, provides advice to the Board of Forestry and the State Forester on methods to help improve the vitality of family forestlands, including improving owners' ability to manage and market their timber and other forest products. The Committee for Family Forestlands continues to evaluate the impact of policy and regulatory changes on family forestland owners.

BACKGROUND AND ANALYSIS

Over the past year, the Committee focused on the objectives/issues identified in their 2022-2023 work plan. The annual report informs the Board of the committee's progress in addressing issues affecting family forestland (Attachment 1).

RECOMMENDATION

The Committee for Family Forestland recommends the Board accept the CFF annual report.

ATTACHMENT

- (1) Committee for Family Forestlands Annual Report to the Board Fiscal Year 2022-2023

Committee for Family Forestlands Annual Report to the Board

Fiscal Year 2022-2023

Annual Report presented to the Board of Forestry September 6, 2023
By Wendy Gerlach, Chair, Committee for Family Forestlands



The Committee for Family Forestlands (“CFF”) is a standing committee established by the Oregon Board of Forestry to assist and advise the State Forester and the Board on issues relevant to some 70,000 family forestland owners in the state, including advice on the formulation of policy and potential effects of changes in forest policy on those lands.

The CFF is pleased to provide a report of its activities over the past year (July 2022– July 2023). Those activities include the CFF’s gaining understanding of issues addressed by the Board through briefing by Oregon Department of Forestry (“ODF”) staff and others. Ben Deumling of the Board has also joined numerous CFF meetings to provide updates about Board work. In sharing perspectives, providing input, and giving advice to the Board and State Forester, the CFF remains mindful of its statutory purpose and charter, as well as of the objectives of the Board and ODF, including those reflected in the Forestry Program for Oregon, the Oregon Indicators of Sustainable Forest Management, and the Climate Change and Carbon Plan.

The CFF hopes that the Board will consider the CFF a resource to the Board and ODF in their work, and looks forward to continued work together.

CFF 2022-2023 voting members:

Wendy Gerlach, Chair (Citizen at Large)
Barrett Brown/Scott Hayes (Northwest Oregon Family Forestland Owner)
Gary Jensen (Southern Oregon Family Forestland Owner)
Maurizio Valerio (Eastern Oregon Family Forestland Owner)
Kate McMichael (Landowner At Large)
Kaola Swanson, Vice-Chair (Conservation Community Representative)
Mark Vroman (Industry Representative)

CFF 2022-2023 ex-officio members:

The CFF benefits from the time and expertise of the CFF ex-officio members, and thanks them for their input. Ex-officio members are:

- Amanda Sullivan-Astor for Associated Oregon Loggers (AOL)
- Rick Zenn for Oregon Small Woodlands Association (OSWA)
- Glenn Ahrens for Oregon State University College of Forestry, OSU Extension Forestry and Natural Resources Program (OSU)
- Julie Woodward for Oregon Forest Resources Institute (OFRI)

CFF 2022-2023 ODF staff support; Board support:

CFF members acknowledge the support and reports received from ODF and the Board generally, and specifically from:

- Forest Resources Division staff
- Protection Division staff
- Planning Branch staff
- State Forester Mukumoto
- Board Chair Kelly
- Board Members

The committee extends special thanks to ODF staff supporting the CFF, currently Mike Kroon and Heather Hendersen, who have provided suggestions, guidance, and administrative support to make CFF meetings productive. In addition, we thank Board Member Ben Deumling for attending CFF meetings and acting as a liaison to the Board. This has provided the opportunity for the CFF to provide informal input to Ben, and the Board, in the course of those meetings, and has also alerted the CFF to other ways in which to engage with ongoing Board and ODF projects.

Chair's Introduction

This has been a busy year for our committee as it has been for the Board of Forestry. Changes during the year include the departure of Barrett Brown as the Northwest landowner representative in January of 2023, and the departure of Mark Vroman (Hampton Family Forests) in June as he reached his term limit. New members included Scott Hayes, briefly succeeding Barrett Brown before resigning, and newly nominated Northwest landowner representative David Bugni. Eric Kranzush (Giustina Land & Timber Co.) joined the CFF as the industry representative in June of 2023. The committee thanks Barrett and Mark for their long tenures on the CFF and looks forward to working with Eric and David (pending David's appointment). The CFF also resumed having in-person (with virtual option) meetings, so many of us met each other in person for the first time this year.

The CFF also switched to a quarterly meeting schedule to match the Board's new schedule (which explains our annual report being shifted from July to September). As the Board considers the purpose and function of all its committees, we are similarly engaged in identifying how we can provide assistance to the Board and ODF and share information out to the small landowner community across Oregon. As we emphasized in last year's annual report, our goal, consistent with our charter, is threefold: (1) informing ourselves about Board and ODF activities, (2) keeping our communities informed, and (3) being proactive in our relationship with the Board and providing timely input to the Board, State Forester, and ODF. We welcome questions and opportunities for input, especially on the priority issues listed below.

This year's Annual Report includes, for the first time, a report of the Forest Legacy and Stewardship Program Working Group. As a reminder, this group was, in 2020, reorganized as a working group under CFF.¹ The Forest Legacy and Stewardship Program Working Group's report is located in the appendix. The CFF was, during the course of the year, briefed by ODF staff about the Forest Legacy Program and its opportunities for landowners. The CFF encourages the Board of Forestry and Oregon Department of Forestry to pursue

¹ The charter of the Forest Legacy and Stewardship Program Working Group states, "The Forest Legacy Program is a conservation program that supports the protection of privately owned forestlands through conservation easements or land purchases. Protection of private forests through the FLP maintains public benefits, including opportunities to hunt, fish, and camp, clean and abundant drinking water, habitat for fish and wildlife, and timber, fuel wood, and other forest products."

expansion and maximization of programs oriented at maintaining forestland, in particular, the opportunities with acquisition and easements using the Forest Legacy program.

2022-2023 Priority Issues

The CFF's priorities overlap with those of the Board and its work plan but include special considerations impacting small forestland owners. These priorities have remained fairly constant in recent years. They include:

- Private Forest Accord: changes to the Forest Practices Act and creation of the Small Forestland Owner Office; landowner incentive programs, including the tax credit, SFSH funding, etc.; determination of disproportionate impact on small forestland owners (eligibility and mitigation options).
- Technical assistance: availability of technical assistance, the need for increased ODF stewardship forester presence in local communities, and the need for help in accessing ODF and other technical assistance and/or funding programs.
- Wildland Urban Interface: mapping, new rules, fire practices, avoiding fragmentation/conversion of WUI forestlands.
- Fire: prevention, recovery, funding, and reforestation.
- Seedling availability: access to seedlings by small landowners in the marketplace and through other distribution programs; availability of diverse seedling varieties.
- Workforce issues: availability of labor for reforestation, fire mitigation esp. thinning, etc.; workforce expansion and skills development; special issues of small landowners in labor markets.
- Eastern Oregon specific needs: the above issues—especially fire, reforestation, seedlings, and workforce—have specific aspects unique to eastside forests.
- Climate change: impact of climate change on forest management, reforestation, forest practices generally, alternative forest management, water, carbon sequestration/storage.
- Forestry Plan for Oregon: attention to the Board's strategic and long-term goals, with particular interest in avoiding conversion of forestlands to other uses and ensuring that our forests are present for future generations.

Detail on Priority Issues and Accomplishments

Private Forest Accord

The CFF has received regular ODF staff briefings on the implementation of the Private Forest Accord, starting with 2022 briefings on the resulting changes to the Forest Practices Act rules. CFF response to these rules included: (i) recognition of the work that timber and conservation participants did to reach agreement, (ii) appreciation of the Adaptive Management approach, (iii) the need for clarity about where landowners can get answers to their questions, (iv) the need for training and outreach about stream classifications, including a standard mapping tool, (v) the importance of ODF outreach to landowners about new enforcement rules, and, overall, (vi) the need to support small forestland owners in their developing management plans that meet the requirements of the Accord.

CFF members are concerned about the disproportionate impact of the Private Forest Accord/revised Forest Practices Act rules on small forest landowners, noting that small forestland owners own a high percentage of stream-adjacent land affected by the new riparian buffer requirements. While this is key habitat for Habitat Conservation Plan covered species, it is also a significant proportion of property for some small forestland owners. CFF members have been consistent in expressing their concern about this impact throughout the rule-making process, including providing input to Ben Deumling and requesting and receiving consistent briefings on the progress of the PFA authors toward more complete disproportionate impact rules and the concomitant legislation. CFF comments have focused on the roles of personal agency and economic viability for small

landowners, especially in the context of an aging landowner base concerned about what might become of their forestland in the future. (For example, will their heirs be able to afford maintaining the property as forest or will they be more likely to sell the property or convert to other uses?).

In addition, the CFF has followed changes over the past year in the Forest Resources Division, including buildout of the Forest Resources Division to include Small Forestland Owner Office. The CFF has received briefings about ODF staff training and community outreach about new rules and practices. The CFF has also heard from ODF staff about landowner assistance programs including the forest conservation tax credit (under the Private Forest Accord), Forest Legacy, and Seedling Coordination programs. As mentioned in last year's CFF report, the CFF is well-placed to review and provide input on developments in this area. A specific CFF suggestion is that the Small Forestland Owner Office become a useful resource "hub" for landowners, providing links to the full range of information, requirements and programs related to small forestland ownership, not just programs created by the Private Forest Accord. The CFF has also discussed the importance of linking (on the website and elsewhere) information provided by ODF about Small Forestland Owner Assistance with complimentary information and programs offered by the OSU Forestry & Natural Resources Extension and other forestry resource and education partners.

Technical Assistance, ODF Website Development, and Outreach

CFF discussions have noted recent changes in ODF structure and, as a positive development, the increased number of Field Foresters/Addition of SFO foresters. Members have consistently emphasized that there is no substitute for local Field/SFO foresters who are accessible and present for local communities.

There is also a strong need for coordination of various programs and funding assistance. As mentioned above, the CFF sees the potential of The Small Forestland Owner Office and the buildout of the ODF website in meeting this need. CFF members reviewed the website in development stages and provided, in an informal "beta user" role, input to ODF staff. Comments on the website included (i) appreciation of the useful one-pager factsheets, (ii) the need for cross-linking of various programs, resources, agencies, etc., and (iii) that templates of program applications, tax credit forms, required written plans, and similar example documents will be of great use to landowners. It was also suggested that website content include examples of how changed management practices under the Private Forest Accord would look on the ground.

Wildland/Urban Interface

CFF members and many small forestland owners are located in the WUI. The CFF spent less time in the past year on WUI issues due to the revision of the mapping system and risk categories, but wildfire risk mapping is of major interest to the CFF community. The CFF is committed to remaining engaged on these issues, which will become even more critical due to the overlap of changes in the Forest Practices Act, insurance availability, and aging of the current landowner cohort. Continuing to recognize and highlight the potential impacts of these "overlaps" is inextricable from the goal of supporting small forestland owners in maintaining their forests as forests and avoiding land conversion, especially in areas with high conversion pressure.

Fire

The CFF was briefed by ODF on fire prevention, fighting, recovery, and mitigation. Small forestland owners continue to experience the impact of past severe fire seasons, including ongoing reforestation struggles, hazard trees, and other impacts of the 2020 fires, while preparing for resilience in the face of future fires. Members of the CFF participated in the SB 762 Small Forestland Grant Program. The SB 762 Small Forestland Grant Program cycle of 2022 provided essential support to the small forestland owner community, and continued support of this program is needed. The CFF is pleased with the SB 762 grant program continuing, as funded by the 2023 legislative session.

Seedling Availability

The CFF has worked on seedling availability for small forestland owners for many years, including collaboration with OSU, the ODF Forest Resources Division, and seedling providers. The Small Forestland Owner Office did include a limited duration seedling coordinator, which position which no longer is funded after June 2023. The CFF considers the seedling program staffing important and would like to see a permanent ODF staff position dedicated to this work. In addition, the Seedling Workgroup created in 2020 and CFF ex-officio member organizations are continuing to work on collaborative solutions to improve on past funding models that have, at times, resulted in mismatch of supply and demand. The CFF seeks to elevate the critical ongoing need for a reliable supply of seedlings, in appropriate species, at a price range viable for small landowners across the state. The committee notes that seedling challenges link to water and labor scarcity, as well.

Workforce Issues

Workforce issues are impacting all sectors and small forestland owners continue to be challenged in finding labor. This is a limiting factor in reforestation, fire prevention and mitigation, and all aspects of landowner work. Suggestions for improvement include the pooling of small landowner labor and equipment contracts to allow small landowners to better compete in the general market. CFF discussions have noted the challenges and opportunities that new programs and management practices present to forest-based communities. There is an ongoing need to recruit and retain new people in the labor pool, and to support the workforce in developing the skills needed for changing forest practices. The CFF has been supportive of potential new programs to provide workforce development in the forest sector, including training relating to new forest practice rules and to the impact of drought, fire, and climate change.

Eastern Oregon Specific Needs

Throughout CFF discussions and recommendations, CFF members remain aware that eastside forests have specific needs around the various priority issues identified by CFF. These include fire (including potential prescriptive burning, as more appropriate for eastside forests), reforestation (seedling availability and species mix), outreach and technical assistance in dispersed communities, workforce shortages, and drought related to climate change.

Climate Change

CFF members have named climate change as a key priority, including programs for reforestation and resilience. The CFF heard from Catherine McDonald of the Oregon Climate Action Commission at its June 2023 meeting and has also been briefed by ODF on its 2021 Climate Change and Carbon Plan. The various priorities of the CFF listed above overlap with and will continue to be driven in part by climate change, especially as to reforestation and seedling availability. Eastern Oregon is in particular need of Field/SFO foresters who understand the specific needs of these forests under the pressure of climate change. Committee discussion, over the year, included the comments that ODF programs should include research and education focused on climate change adaptation strategies, and that planning for the integration and ongoing support of future generations is key to this effort.

Forestry Program for Oregon

The CFF has been following the plan for revision of the Forestry Program for Oregon. The CFF is particularly interested in strategies to avoid conversion of forestland to other uses and the Board's assessment of landowner objectives, including the varied goals of Small Forestland Owners (as those goals have been reported by past studies, including the National Woodland Owner Survey for Oregon). The CFF is available to provide input on the FPFO from a small landowner perspective, the topic being squarely within the CFF's charter goal of advising the Board on topics including "maintenance and enhancement of the positive contributions that family

forestland owners make to Oregon's vitality, including timber availability and the protection and enhancement of watersheds and fish and wildlife habitat." The Committee is aware of the work that the Board is doing to update the FPFO and would like to be actively engaged in the process.

2023-2024 Work Plan

The CFF will continue to track topics before the BOF that are of interest to family forestland owners and continue working on the other items of interest noted in this report. The CFF looks forward to opportunities to advise the Board and State Forester on CFF priority issues. Natural areas for CFF input include the Small Forestland Owner Office development, related ODF website buildout, and the Forestry Plan for Oregon's small landowner components. Climate smart forestry will look different for small forest landowners, and small forestland owners want to be part of those conversations. Avoiding conversion of forestland is a priority of the CFF and the CFF will be able to provide insight about conversion pressures experienced by small forestland owners. Engagement of younger generations, as future woodland owners, as stewards, and as members of the forest sector workforce are and will continue to be important aspects of keeping our forests as forests. Finally, the CFF will likely continue to comment on the importance of landowner education, incentives, and technical assistance, and the critical role of regional stewardship foresters.

As the Board continues to evaluate the role and function of its committees, the CFF stands ready to provide input about how it can be used efficiently and how it can contribute. As the Board moves forward with the Forestry Plan for Oregon, and its background investigation of the varied goals and management practices of small landowners, CFF encourages the Board to reach out to the CFF to add input and understanding to information the Board has received through general outreach. No one knows better than small forestland owners how they feel about and care for their forests!

Appendix: CFF Forest Legacy and Stewardship Program Working Group Report

The Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act of 1978 (Act, 16 U.S.C. 2103A), as amended, empowered the USDA Forest Service to partner with state forestry agencies to provide technical and financial assistance to private forest landowners. The Act stipulates that each State Forester or equivalent state official must establish a State Forest Stewardship Coordinating Committee. The Forest Legacy and Stewardship Program Working Group (Working Group) is organized under the Committee for Family Forestlands (CFF) and acknowledged as the body that serves as the State Forest Stewardship Coordinating Committee.

The Forest Legacy Program (FLP) in Oregon aims to safeguard the state's rich natural heritage and ensure the lasting protection of its forest lands. As a collaborative effort between the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and the Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF), this program seeks to strategically acquire and conserve ecologically significant forest lands in perpetuity. The Forest Legacy and Stewardship Program Working Group is a key part of the annual project application selection process for the Forest Legacy Program.

The Working Group is tasked with providing formal review and recommendations to ODF staff on matters related to the Forest Stewardship and Forest Legacy Programs with primary areas of responsibilities including the following:

- Review and rank annual applications submitted to the Forest Legacy and Community Forestry Programs;
- Review and provide feedback on proposed changes to the implementation of the Forest Stewardship Program or related landowner assistance programs;
- Review and provide feedback on proposed revisions to Oregon's Forest Management Planning System (aka, Uniform Plan);
- Review and provide feedback regarding updates and revisions to the State Forest Action Plan; and
- Provide advice and support in maintaining the partnerships necessary for statewide implementation of these programs, including appropriate outreach and training.

The Working Group's primary areas of responsibilities correlate with ODF work that fluctuates in frequency and volume therefore the Working Group is convened on an as needed basis and completes review work outside of meetings. During fiscal year 2022-2023, the Working Group convened in August 2022 where they provided feedback and recommendations regarding three FLP projects that were being considered for the FLP 2024 fiscal year cycle.

Thus far, in the 2023-2024 fiscal year the Working Group has already met twice. In July 2023 the Working Group was presented with three new project proposal and two resubmissions for projects in the FLP 2025 cycle. In August 2023 the Working Group met to rank these projects and consider recommendations to the State Forester. This work will be shared with the State Forester and inform decision making. Projects approved by the State Forester will move forward to the USFS FLP ranking process in September 2023.

the long road of wildfire recovery

one landowner's journey | year 3

Kate McMichael | Elk Ridge Tree Farm | Vida, OR





















