

EMERGENCY FIRE COST COMMITTEE

June 3, 2025

In accordance with the provisions of ORS 477.455, a meeting of the Emergency Fire Cost Committee (EFCC) was held in the Tillamook Room of the Oregon Department of Forestry Headquarters in Salem and via Teams Video Conferencing on Tuesday, June 3, 2025.

Committee Members Present

Brennan Garrelts, Chair
Kathryn VanNatta (via Teams)
John Davis
Eric Kranzush

Others Present (in person)

Nancy Hirsch, EFCC Administrator
Lorna Hobbs, EFCC Finance Coordinator
Kate Skinner, Acting State Forester, ODF
Michael Curran, Fire Protection Division Chief, ODF
Ron Graham, Deputy Chief, Fire Protection, ODF
Kiel Nairns, Cost Recovery Specialist, ODF
Neal Laugle, Aviation Unit Manager, ODF
Emily Sorce, Executive Support Specialist, ODF
Chad Washington, OFIC

Others Present (via Teams)

Alexis Webb, Incident Business Advisor, ODF
Brian Pew, Area Director, ODF
David Helmricks, Wildfire Investigator, ODF
Dawn Sleight, Administrative Specialist, ODF
Deanna Drinkwater, Incident Business Advisor, ODF
Don Everingham, Area Director, ODF
Gina Miner, Assistant Area Director, ODF
Jamie Paul, Senior Planning Analyst, ODF
Jerilee Johnson, Area Accountant, ODF
Kay Rinker, District Business Manager, ODF
Kelsey Ramos, Direct Bill Coordinator, ODF
Kristi Freeman, District Business Manager, ODF
Kristina Sheppard, Executive Support Specialist, ODF
Levi Hopkins, Deputy Chief of Policy and Planning, ODF
Megan Fair, Incident Billings Coordinator, ODF
Megan Frizzell, Administrative Specialist, ODF
Ole Buch, District Forester, ODF
Rena Meyer, District Business Manager, ODF
Sione Filimoehala, CFO, DAS
TJ Ramos, Assistant to the Area Director, ODF
Tyler McCarty, District Forester, CFPA
Tracy Wrolson, Protection Finance Unit Manager, ODF
TZA (Teresa Alcock), Fire Program Analyst, ODF

ITEM 1: CALL TO ORDER AND CHAIR COMMENTS

Chair Garrelts called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. on Tuesday, June 3, 2025. He verified that all present were identified, and that all members had received meeting materials in advance. Finalized materials will be made available on the Board of Forestry website after any last-minute documents are added and any amendments are made, following the conclusion of this meeting. He reminded those in attendance that the committee would take comments from the public during agenda item number 10, and that if anyone would like to make a comment to please prepare themselves for when the committee arrives at that agenda item.

Chair Garrelts welcomed committee members Eric Kranzush and John Davis to their first meeting as members. Eric represents the at-large position, and John Davis represents the East side position. Both members come with extensive fire finance and firefighting experience, and Chair Garrelts believes they will be great additions to the committee as it moves forward into the future.

ITEM 2: APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE MARCH 5, 2025 MEETING *[Decision Item]*

Committee member Kathryn VanNatta moved to adopt the meeting minutes of the March 4th, 2025, meeting as provided. Chair Garrelts seconded the motion, noting that the other members were not present for that meeting. All were in favor, with Chair Garrelts noting that there was no need to take a counter vote. The motion passed unanimously.

ITEM 3: FINANCIAL STATUS OF THE OREGON FOREST LAND PROTECTION FUND *[Information Item]*

The financial status of the Oregon Forestland Protection Fund was reported by Lorna Hobbs, EFCC Finance Coordinator and reviewed by the committee. The report covered the Oregon Forest Land Protection Fund's actual revenue and expenditures through April 30, 2025, and projected revenues and expenditures through the end of the fiscal year. The beginning balance on July 1, 2024 was **\$10,811,138**.

Revenues for fiscal year 2025 (FY25)

- Item #1: To date, total assessment revenue received is \$9,147,038.
- Item #2: Harvest tax revenues received as of April 30th equal \$1,365,271. There will be one more payment for the fiscal year.
- Item #3: Interest received to date is \$240,045. The interest rate dropped again from 4.70% to 4.60% on March 12th.
- Items #4-#6: The three entries are the result of fund reconciliations of previous fiscal years that resulted in monies owed back to the Fund. There hadn't been time to verify the amounts transferred with ODF yet, and there are questions related to fiscal year 2017. Once verified, the specific details of those transfers can be provided.

Total revenue received for FY25 as of April 30th was \$10,752,254. Estimated total revenue, including revenues from previous fiscal years, is \$11,877,479.

Expenditures for FY25

- Items #1-#2: These items are monies owed back to the Large Fire Fund (ODF) as a result of previous fiscal year fund reconciliations as discussed previously.
- Item #3: Estimated payroll and operating expenses remain at \$185,000 for FY25. The tracked estimate is currently at about \$164,000, so it is likely to remain under the \$185,000 estimate.
- Item #4: This is the payment of \$3,000,000 for the Fund's contribution to fire season 2024 severity costs that was made in November 2024.

2024 Fire Season Draft Claims

The current estimated net claim total for FY25 claims is **\$130,490,517**.

In September 2024, \$4 million was advanced to the Douglas Forest Protective Association for the Dixon fire and an additional \$6,000,000 was paid to the Department of Forestry to pay for fire season expenses.

Fiscal year 25 expenditures are at \$13 million, with payroll and operating costs for fiscal year 25 being transferred to ODF before the end of June. The total estimated expenditure amount, including those from previous fiscal years, is \$13,593,992.

The fund balance as of April 30, 2025, was \$9,094,625, with an estimated ending balance of \$9,645,983.

Chair Garrelts asked a clarifying question regarding item number one under revenue. He asked if the amount under revenue was being held in suspense or if it had been fully received, and Lorna confirmed it had been fully received.

With no additional comments or questions from the committee, Chair Garrelts thanked Lorna for her report and moved on to Agenda Item 4.

ITEM 4: WEATHER UPDATE *[Information Item]*

Fire Program Analyst Teresa Alcock, preferred name TzA, provided a weather update & fire season outlook.

Precipitation: In March, there was some flooding which contributed to higher levels of precipitation. The following months saw below average precipitation, leading to abnormally dry conditions by the end of June in many areas of the state.

Soil Moisture: In April, TzA noted that soil moistures were very dry. Unexpected cooler weather in May gave some soil moisture improvement in the West side and in the valley, but overall, it is still very dry. The Pendleton/Columbia Basin area going up into Tri-Cities and Southeast Washington have very dry conditions, as well as along the coast.

Snow-water Check: We had a really good winter snowpack but saw strong snow melt in April from warmer and drier conditions. Snow has continued to melt since then and is melting faster than normal but within average.

Drought: In April, Oregon was declared drought-free. Drought levels were improved from previous years, but we're going back into moderate drought in areas around Pendleton in the Northeast and also in the Northwest. It is expected to persist over the next few months. Fuel moistures rose slightly in May due to weather but have decreased and are forecasted to continue to decrease.

Three Month Outlook: The potential for large costly fires in ODF Districts were presented based on Energy Release Component and 1000 Hour Fuel Moisture data. Maps can be seen for some of the ODF Districts on slides 10-14 of the weather section of the meeting materials found [here](#). They take into account climatological history, fire history, and large fire costs. Pulses of heat are expected in the short term, with overall expectations of above normal temperatures and well below normal precipitation through the summer months.

Northwest Coordination Center Significant Fire Potential: Northwest Coordination Center has produced a Seven Day Significant Fire Potential report which shows many areas as still in the green (low risk of significant fire). Klamath will increase to elevated risk at the end of the week due to heat coming in.

NIFC National Significant Wildland Fire Potential Outlook: The National Significant Wildland Fire Potential Outlook for June expands the above normal fire potential that had been seen in the Pendleton area down into Central Oregon. In July, it encompasses the Eastern half of the state- similar to last year. August and September both show the entire state at above normal, as well as essentially the entire Northwest of the US.

Summary: Brief, weak La Niña weather has been declared over. We are now in an ENSO neutral and are expected to remain there through summer. With average or above-average ridging over the PNW as well as some residual monsoon effects, there is a likelihood of warmer and drier than average conditions with heightened chances of lightning. Given the conditions and fire activity over the past decade, consider 2025 an active fire season unless conditions strongly signal otherwise.

Chair Garrelts thanked TzA for the thorough report. There were no questions from the committee, and Chair Garrelts moved on to Agenda Item 5.

ITEM 5: UPDATE ON STATUS OF LARGE FIRE COST COLLECTION EFFORTS *[Information Item]*

Chair Garrelts turned the floor over to Kiel Nairns, the Cost Collection Specialist for ODF. He introduced himself and also gave a brief summary of the report cover sheet to introduce the new committee members to the material in the presentation.

Claims Under Active Cost Collection: Fires highlighted in green are new cost recovery cases that had been added since the last report. Larch Creek fire is a restitution case from last year, which is associated with a criminal case. The County turned it over to the DA and they're the ones handling that case now, so if any money comes in it will be through that process. The demand for the South Obenchain fire went out recently. For some of the fires, especially from 2020 as there was a lot going on during that time, it has taken a little while longer to compile and process the documents in order to have a solid package to send to the responsible party. Echo Mountain is now combined with Kimberling, which had previously been demanded on its own. ORS 477.069 gives ODF the authority to combine demands in order to simplify the process. Financially, the fires were tied together from the beginning as a complex, so it makes it easier to reconcile them together if money is received. McIver and Cedar Creek were recently demanded and ODF is still working through the process on those. There are a couple more later in the report that were demanded out that they have received payment on already, which is covered later in the report.

Claims Under Long Term Collection Action: This is a snapshot of some of the fires ODF has under payment plan or restitution. Payments are being received, but it is over an extended period of time. 26175 Siuslaw is highlighted in green, and it just recently completed so that payment plan has been fully satisfied and will be closed so it will drop off the next report. **The payments received column is an ongoing total - since the last report, there was a little over \$2000 received for some of the smaller cases.**

Closed Fire Cost Collection Claims: The 7K and Mercer Lake fires that are highlighted were demanded and paid within the last quarter. The 7K fire was a statutory cost recovery amount. Operator-related fires are mandated to pay at least \$300,000 in fire costs. Mercer Lake was billed out by the local unit as part of a new process under the new policy to help get some of the small to medium sized fires out the door and through the process more quickly. Mystic Mountain is the other fire on that list, which full payment has now been received on. That brings **total collections on closed fires in the last quarter to just over \$550,000.**

Significant Fire Investigations in Progress: Kiel reminded the committee that this is not an all-inclusive list of all investigations, but rather a list of fires that either had a large investment by the committee, an ODF IMT was deployed on, or that had a high public interest. If they move to cost recovery, and not all of them will, then the fires will be moved to the appropriate table in the report showing the collection. If they are not determined to be sufficient for cost recovery, then they will be removed from this list and from the report altogether.

Chair Garrelts thanked Kiel for the report and noted that the total dollar amount from the four different categories is substantial. Those are citizen's dollars, and it's important and valuable to continue to work towards collecting those sums. He also stated that people and businesses talk about these amounts and it's a good deterrent to have transparency with the public that if you are negligent in your actions, it can be extremely financially painful, and he hopes the public can continue to understand that and prioritize fire safety. He thanked Kiel for being the tip of the spear in making sure that message comes to reality.

There were no additional questions or comments from the committee, and Chair Garrelts moved on to Agenda Item 6.

ITEM 6: ELIGIBILITY OF FIREFIGHTING COSTS FOR THE OREGON FOREST LAND PROTECTION FUND *[Decision Item]*

Chair Garrelts turned the floor over to Nancy Hirsch, the EFCC Administrator, to give an overview of the proposed changes to the updated policy that was adopted in November 2024.

Nancy explained that the updated policy was originally approved in November 2024, as the Chair had mentioned. It was put together through a collaborative effort of the Department of Forestry and EFCC staff. At the same time the policy was being created, fire season was happening and as such there have been some proposed minor changes.

In the handout provided to committee members (found in the meeting materials [here](#)), there were two attachments to the staff report. The first attachment reflected the new proposed policy with track changes. The second attachment has no track changes. The first item relates to four housekeeping changes that address cleaning up language that was either missed or had grammar issues. The last three proposed changes addressed an omission and provide some clarification specific to trainee eligibility on fires. It affects two sections – both under eligibility and under not eligible. The third item was a clarification related to protection funded, all or part, in reference to eligibility. These are important changes for consistency and meeting the goal of the original proposed policy of trying to be more efficient and effective in dealing with fire records.

The next steps would be to continue to learn throughout this fire season and plan to complete an after action review at the end of the fire season, then come back to the committee and determine if other improvements to the policy are necessary. Nancy offered to go through the changes in more detail if desired by the committee and recommended that the committee approve the changes proposed to the eligibility policy as presented.

She opened the floor for questions, and Kathryn VanNatta asked if the last three changes were distinctions without a difference- if they changed the policy or were for clarification. Nancy answered that one change was clarification related to the protection funded, all or part. For the trainee edits, the approved proposal shifted all of the operational positions in the district budgets to be eligible for reimbursement, which was included in the fiscal analysis that was completed. An unintended consequence of the way the policy was written was that it took those operational positions functioning as trainees and pushed them into the not eligible category. That was not the intent, and that item is essentially a clean-up of language to match the intent of the policy. The omission was related to the fact that the proposed policy today would basically make *all* trainees on *all* statistical and approved threat fires eligible regardless of the type of incident. It adds in

the Type 3, and that would be the only change. Kathryn thanked her for the explanation and noted that it was what she had understood but also wanted to have that for the record.

The Chair asked for additional committee questions or comments, and Eric Kranzush stated that filling leadership roles on fire teams is a constant challenge, especially during the most difficult fire seasons. In his opinion, the committee should not create any impediments to ensuring that professional development. He stated he supports the changes, especially for the clarification on the trainees, and would recommend that the committee adopt the changes as proposed. Chair Garrelts clarified that it was a motion, which Eric confirmed. John Davis seconded the motion. **Chair Garrelts requested that all those in favor of adopting the update to the eligibility policy as presented to respond with aye. All were in favor, and as such no request for votes of opposition was made.** The motion passed unanimously, and the Chair moved on to Agenda Item 7.

ITEM 7: AGENCY AND BUSINESS SERVICES REPORT *[Information Item]*

Chair Garrelts introduced Acting State Forester Kate Skinner, Fire Protection Division Chief Michael Curran, and Deputy Chief of Fire Protection Ron Graham. The floor was turned over to Kate for the Agency and Business Services report. James Short, CFO, was not in attendance due to a scheduling conflict and Kate introduced Tracy Wrolson, Protection Finance Unit Manager, who was there to help fill in. Before turning the floor over, Kate thanked Lorna and Nancy for their work on end of fire season audits for fire season 2024. She noted the tremendous effort to get those completed and also thanked the Districts and Associations for their work on the audits as well. Kate then turned the floor over to Tracy.

I. Agency Financials

- The committee was asked to review two items that were provided on behalf of James Short. One was the agency financials, which was the Oregon Department of Forestry Monthly Financial Condition Report for May.
 - In line with Kate's comments on the good work being done, Tracy highlighted part of the Financial Report that showed the work going on across the state to bring in revenue for OFLPF and for the agency as a whole. The section he shared had a table titled "Summaries of Estimated Outstanding Assets and Liabilities," in which it showed that as of May 20th there was \$133 million in outstanding assets. Tracy noted that since the last report \$12 million of co-op, non-cost share, and cost share accounts receivable have been invoiced. Final approval is pending for the \$39 million Lane 1 cost share reconciliation, and multiple cost share reconciliations for other incidents are scheduled for May. This will bring in upwards of an additional \$40 million of revenue. In total, in the last month and a half approximately \$90 million has been billed out or has been reconciled and is being prepared to bill out in the next week or so. Tracy gave kudos to the Districts, District Business Managers, staff in the field and staff in Salem that have been working hard to generate this revenue and get our billings out in a timely manner.
- The remainder of the report was left for the review of the committee – there was no discussion, and no comments were made by the committee.

II. Legislative Session – Budget and policy bills

- The second item provided for review on behalf of James Short was a legislative session and preliminary LFO Recommended Budget. No comments were made during Tracy's report, but additional information was provided after the Severity Financial Status Report was given (below).

III. Strategic Investments Financial Report

- 2020 Investments and Carry-Over of Previous Funds totaled \$1,504,959.93
- Actual Spent: \$858,128.85 with an additional \$75,800.20 in pending expenditures; Remaining Projected Balance as of April 30th: \$585,447.18
- Undistributed Funds: \$0

Page two of the Strategic Investments meeting material had a breakdown by project. Many are still in progress, but movement is being made, and expenditures are being shown against the projects. A brief synopsis of the current status of each of these projects was included in the report (Agenda Item 7_III, Pages 2-3 in the meeting materials found [here](#)) for the committee's review. Tracy stated that the goal is to have the projects wrapped up as soon as possible, pending fire season, weather, etc.

Tracy paused for any questions from the committee, and Nancy stated that she was able to forward some photos of a couple strategic investments late the day before from Eastern Oregon Area related to the guard station in Klamath-Lake District. She also included a photo of the fire cache trailer out of Walker Range.

Chair Garrelts stated that his only comment is that some of the monies had been awarded several years ago and he looked forward to their completion and seeing them in action, especially recognizing the fire season that the agency may be facing.

The Chair recognized Gina Meyer, the Assistant Area Director for Eastern Oregon Area. She extended an invitation to any committee members who would like to see the guard station. There will be an all employee meeting on June 25th. Chair Garrelts thanked her for the invitation and let her know that the committee would be in touch if any members wanted to attend. He then turned the floor back over to Tracy for the remainder of his report.

IV. FEMA Update

- Any outstanding claims on the ODF FEMA/Public Assistance Status report with an asterisk are prepositioning claims and those have been submitted for reimbursement but are not reflected in the dollar amount that's pending review in the "rollup" section at the bottom of the report.
- Older claims are being wrapped up, with many estimated to be completed within a year. There are also several admin claims, which are submitted after a fire claim has been fully completed.
- There has been some great progress made on recent fire seasons, including auditing and submitting claims. Getting costs reconciled and sent to FEMA and Public Assistance ASAP is a priority.
- **Grand total due to ODF: \$73,492,722**

Tracy stated that there were older claims being wrapped up, with the report showing many are estimated to be completed within a year. The report also showed several admin claims, which are submitted after a fire claim has been fully completed. There are also some smaller claims for residual costs dealing with Public Assistance, where ODF is able to receive monies back for work outside the area of the actual fire. Although the claims are generally smaller, it brings in some dollars that offset our overall costs. Tracy also stated that there has been great progress made on recent fire season claims, including auditing and actual claim submission. They are working hard on getting costs reconciled and sent to FEMA and Public Assistance ASAP.

The Chair remarked that it was excellent work, and Tracy continued to the report on Severity Financial Status.

V. Severity Financial Status

Severity hasn't had much movement since the last meeting, with the new fire season coming up. Tracy stated that Michael or Ron would likely discuss it more since severity resources will be coming on shortly. The 2024 Fire Season Severity Budget Status report had a detailed breakout of severity resources, expenditures, and budgets.

- **Projected Allocation Balance for the rest of the biennium: \$982,248**
- **OFLFP contribution of \$3 million**

Chair Garrelts thanked Tracy for the thorough report, and with no further questions or comments from committee members he turned the floor back over to Acting State Forester Kate Skinner. She noted that the Ways and Means subcommittee hearing would be on Thursday. She also noted that the recommended budget that was sent out reflected the current service level. She stated that there was a lot of competition for dollars and a lot of difficult choices that the state was dealing with as a whole, but that overall, she was satisfied with the recommended budget. She also pointed out that the recommended budget does not reflect the ongoing conversations around large wildfire funding in Legislature. The Deputy Director of Fire Operations, Kyle Williams, and the Legislative Director, Derrick Wheeler, were at the Capitol and had many meetings scheduled to try to answer questions and assist folks with understanding the needs and plans for wildfire funding. Kate turned the floor over to Fire Protection Division Chief Michael Curran to discuss the status of large wildfire funding and Legislature.

Michael opened with the reminder that sine die was believed to be June 18th but said that it will likely go into the next week. The recommended budget that Kate mentioned is SB5521. That will be with the hearing on Thursday, and there were some nuances this year. The meeting was originally scheduled for the previous week but was cancelled due to some of the nuances around the Harvest Tax Bill and with potential changes to it being made. Passing the budget bill and then making changes to the harvest tax for HB3940 (fire funding bill) needed to be further assessed to establish the potential

downstream impacts, and so the meeting was delayed to make sure that they had figured out all of the implications. Michael stated he didn't know all of the details, but that the Harvest Tax Bill was passed and the Budget Bill has the hearing on Thursday.

HB3940, which would directly impact the committee, was still in play. He noted it was an odd session, and that some folks had waited until the last minute to really dive into it. He also noted that a lot of the work and attention started when the Governor made a public statement regarding the use of the kicker for fire funding, which is part of why Derrick and Kyle were down at the Legislature. He said it was likely that they would spend most of that week and the next week in the building, along with OSFM, really just trying to have conversations with legislators, make sure that folks are tracking the issues, and to be available for questions as needed. He stated that ODF would continue to keep a very close eye on HB3940 as well as SB83, which was going to be the primary vehicle for the Wildfire Hazard Map repeal that was now being used as bargaining chip of sorts to try to make some movement on the fire funding bill. It was likely that the bill (map repeal) would go through, but there was a lot of unknowns out there since it was being held as a bargaining chip during the session.

A few other agency-specific bills were still in play. SB1051 would ultimately change the hiring of the State Forester from the Board of Forestry to the Governor's office. HB2817 would essentially abolish permit closure and had passed through all of the committees and was headed to the Governor's office for signature. HB2819, which would allow ODF to have a little more flexibility in being able to write citations when a first responder witnessed it and there is good proof for a case, has passed the House and has moved on to the Senate. All signs indicate that it will get across the finish line as well; Levi and Derrick were pulled into the building three or four times over two days in various committees to answer questions and make some future amendments to it but ultimately ODF thinks they ended up in a good spot with it.

Michael stated that it would be a wild two or three weeks as all of the bills come to a conclusion. There has been talks of all, nothing, or bits and pieces of the fire funding bill which made it difficult to have an idea of where it would end up. He did acknowledge that Kyle and Derrick had been spending a lot of time at the Capitol and that there is a good understanding of the fire funding issue as a whole.

There were no questions or comments from the Chair or committee members. Chair Garrelts expressed appreciation for the update on the legislative process and on the communication about what is happening and then moved on to Agenda Item 8.

ITEM 8: PROTECTION DIVISION REPORT *[Information Item]*

Michael opened for the Protection Division by jokingly referencing TZA's "warm and fuzzy" presentation. He noted that all signs are pointing to another bad fire season, and that it really kicked off when the faucet turned off on the state in April and conditions changed rapidly. The improvement in the drought map had a lot of people thinking we would be in a good spot, but that quickly changed as summer approached. There has been a lot of good work going on behind the scenes to make sure that ODF is prepped for fire season at the division level and at the district level, so they are feeling good about where they are at from a preparedness level.

He reported that there are districts starting to go into fire season. Southwest Oregon and Walker Range went in June 1st, Central Oregon went in June 2nd, and he has heard that Northeast is going to go in Thursday followed by DFPA and CFPA on Friday. As of Friday, that will be at least half of the districts statewide, and likely the further they get into June more of the west side districts will go into fire season as well. He also reported an uptick of fire responses, mostly in Southwest Oregon and Central Oregon, although most of them have been able to be caught fairly small. ODF is also helping out quite a bit with out-of-state dispatches, recently primarily through the Northwest Compact with a few staff still up in Alaska on a preposition. They're expecting their fire season to pick up shortly. ODF was also taking advantage of some work with the state of Minnesota to further bolster ODF aviation qualifications. They have a few folks in Minnesota and he thought one in Florida. Canada has seen their fire season ramp up pretty quickly over the last week, so they have 14 resources in Alberta and a few more were sent to Saskatchewan this week as well. All in all, around 27-28 that are out of state right now assisting our partners.

Michael mentioned that there is also talk of putting together a NW Compact IMT to assist in Canada. This was a concept that has been used historically, but there's been a lot of conversations about potentially utilizing one this fire season due to the federal funding shortfalls and staffing. Michael would like to be able to support it as best they can, because there could be a very high likelihood that ODF may be asking for a similar type of resource this summer and while things are a bit slower he wants to offer support where possible. If they do order a NW Compact IMT, it is possible that three to five more people could be deployed out of state.

He continued that Ron and his staff were doing a lot of good work trying to bolster ODF's state-to-state agreements. They have added Rhode Island recently and are working on an agreement with Kentucky. There are also a handful of other states that they are trying to get the agreements across the finish line with so that they can bolster state-to-state agreements and more easily be able to share resources and take care of the financial side a bit easier when they need additional help with fires.

He also touched on the federal impacts, which were touched on at the previous meeting in March. There is still quite a bit unknown, but as far as staffing he has been told within leadership levels at the PNWCG that they are still planning on fully hiring their primary fire positions for the most part. There may be some delayed start times- typically they bring them on May or June 1st and some of these resources may not start until June 15th, July 1st, or even end of July this season. ODF Districts are working to try to backfill some of those as best as possible and help cover our partners. One thing that is being realized is the impact that will happen nationally due to the deferred resignation program (DRP), early retirement options, and the amount of staff that have red card qualifications that took part in those programs. For the Forest Service, there is an estimated 1600 staff nationally that have red card qualifications and took part in the DRP. Last summer there were 44 interagency IMTs, it was 40 as of a month ago, and now they're saying 37 after the second round of DRP that just completed. It's an alarming trend nationally, with an estimated 7 interagency IMTs in Region 6 that could easily become 6 or even 5. The impact nationally and locally is big, which is part of the driver for the NW Compact IMT mentioned previously. Additionally, there has been a lot of impacts to fire finance staff within federal agencies, in particular around buying teams and purchasing cards. Last he had heard, they were down to just 11 purchasing cards in the region. They've been able to work through some policy changes to where they're getting close to where they were last summer with the amount of staff that can have purchasing cards going into summer, so that's a good thing, but there are still some concerns with the lack of fire finance staff and ultimately what those buying teams will look like for federal agencies. Tracy, the Protection Finance Unit, and the District Business Managers are tracking it very closely.

Michael returned to the staff changes due to the DRP. He stated that for the 1600 people he mentioned, originally they would not have been able to come back and work for those agencies for five years. They've been able to work through some policy changes in that area, and there may be a pathway in particular for the Forest Service. The BLM is kind of waiting to see how the Forest Service figures it out, but they are trying to implement a change in policy so that they can bring back some of those red carded individuals that were part of the program and hire them back for this summer. The last conversation he had with his counterpart within the Forest Service indicated that all signs were pointing to them making really good headway to have a pathway there.

I. BLM Agreement

- This is the first fiscal year of the new WOOP agreement, which has an option to extend annually for the next 5 years.
- A meeting was held a couple weeks ago as part of the agreement, discussing the budget for the upcoming fiscal year. 12% increase in the overall budget, and more conversations will be needed before the bill goes out for the next fiscal year. Agreed to additional meetings prior to July to fine tune and work through issues. Much will be tied to the outcome of the legislative session.

There were no questions or comments from the committee. Chari Garrelts thanked him for the report, and Michael turned the floor over to Ron Graham.

II. GeoBoard

- Meetings have been shifted to a quarterly model, and the next meeting will be held later this month.
- Some new members have joined.
- Along with the membership update, they are considering moving to a working group or task group depending on legislative outcomes.
 - The workload is light and in fairness to everyone's time and overall efficiency, they may have a standing work group that projects can be tasked to as needed.
- In May, agency administrator training was held. Attendees included long term District Foresters, Unit Foresters, and other staff who have served as agency administrators previously but also included some potential new deputy agency administrators that have never served but are interested in doing so. Some were from other programs and divisions.
 - Ron expressed appreciation for Nancy's attendance at the training, as a lot of knowledge sharing occurred.
 - Expressed that the conversation also centered on changing business rules around fires from cost shares to suppression strategies, tactics, etc.
 - The training had great attendance, and they are looking at an annual refresher vs full blown training moving forward depending on interest and need within the agency.

III. Forest Land Classification Status Report

- Still on hold for direction from the Governor's office, pending outcomes of the legislative session.

There were no questions or comments from the committee, and Ron turned the floor over to Aviation Manager Neal Laugle.

IV. Severity Resource Plan

- Last year 2 type 1 helicopters were brought on under a "call when needed" agreement, and this year those have been solidified under a contract.
 - The type 1 that was in Glendale last year will be in Creswell this year to help support Northwest Oregon and South Cascade.
 - Contract was awarded to Croman Helicopters.
 - The other type 1 will stay in Klamath Falls
 - Award was posted and they are in the seven-day protest period until Friday.
- After the incident where King Air with the Forest Service lost a wing and had fatalities several years ago, the NTSB recommended further inspections on Twin Commander aircraft, which makes up 85-90% of air attack platforms.
 - Fuel leak issues were discovered, and cracks in the tail section of aircraft
 - Due to the number of repairs and replacement parts needed there is a shortage, which is resulting in delays to those aircraft being back in service and therefore a potential shortage in air attack platforms.
 - Potential for two air attacks per platform
 - Offers throughout Region 6 and others to help staff other agency platforms with the air attacks who do not have federal platforms
- ODF has 2 air attack platforms that are being finalized.
 - Inspections with FAA and then will be going to Redmond June 10th to get federally carded.
 - Will be 75-day emergency agreement for this season
 - 1 in La Grande and 1 in Roseburg
 - Working on a third platform for backup (if a platform is down for maintenance or if there is additional need based on fire season)
 - Significant help from Region 6 to make it happen in time for fire season this year
- Multi-Mission Aircraft (MMA) update
 - The issues from last summer have been corrected on the Partenavia and it will be up and ready to go for this fire season.
 - ODF has been successful in the source procurement of the new MMA aircraft
 - Contract will be signed this week
 - Anticipated delivery date of April 2026, potentially sooner
 - Intent is to be ready for use during the 2026 fire season
- Severity contract resources coming on
 - Single engine scoopers in the Dalles come on June 8th.
 - Discussion tomorrow regarding the start of two single engine air tankers in Prineville, with a potential start date of June 15th
 - Confirmed for Chair Garrelts that there are no west side SEATs.

Chair Garrelts requested clarification regarding whether the air attack platforms were under contract and already in the severity program, and then being carded for federal use to be able to fly off hours for federal fires. Neil clarified that they are under a 75-day minimum contract under an emergency agreement funded by severity, and that the Chair's understanding of being carded was correct.

Katherine VanNatta stated that she appreciated the positioning in Creswell of the aircraft for Northwest Oregon, recognizing that the state is facing a potentially bad fire season in the western part of the state.

Michael Curran added to the discussion about the air attack platforms, stating that he was excited about the opportunity that they had. They were only planned for this year as a response to some of the federal platforms being grounded, but they have every intention of turning it into a permanent fixture moving forward because aircraft is not being used less- if anything they need access to more. If HB3940 passes or if they are somehow able to get additional severity funding, the goal is to make that program permanent. In the past, ODF has lacked a program to provide a way to build up air attack qualifications throughout ODF, and these platforms would provide that as well. Air attack is a qualification that ODF has been short on historically, and being able to bolster the aviation program in general once the platforms are up and running is very exciting.

V. Strategic Investment Status Report

- The Protection Division opted to forgo this report unless there were questions or comments from the committee. There were none.

During the aviation discussion, Katherine VanNatta mentioned a general concern. Since half of the districts were in fire season and the Legislature was still ongoing, she wanted to make sure that there was adequate resource planning to get any immediate work that would need to be done as the result of the Legislative Session. She stated that it would potentially be a lot of staff time and that the completion of any work may not happen as quickly as it would for some agencies that don't have the same workload as ODF in the summer, and she remained concerned about that. Michael responded that from a staffing standpoint, even if HB3940 didn't pass, he feels good about where they are at with their current service level and all of the planning work that they are doing. They are bringing some resources on early given the early fire season start in some districts, including the SEATs and single engine scoopers Neil mentioned. In terms of rulemaking, ODF has been successful with some investments made in staffing, especially in the policy shop within the division. Ryan Miller fills a dedicated rulemaking position, and if there is rulemaking to be done in the summer once the session is over he is in the queue for being the main point of contact and maintaining that workload so that other staff can focus on putting out fires. He acknowledged that depending on how severe the fire season is that they may need to pivot on some things, but at the end of the day they are set up well for success moving forward. Katherine thanked him for his response, stating that she appreciated that ODF is well positioned but wanted to note that it could get out of hand. Outside expectations of what could be accomplished should be scaled due to the extracurricular activities that ODF does during the summer. Michael concurred, and the Chair asked for any further comment or questions from the committee for Agenda Item 8.

There were no further questions or comments. Chair Garrelts thanked the Protection Division for their thorough report and moved on to Agenda Item 9.

ITEM 9: EFCC ADMINISTRATOR REPORT *[Information Item]*

The Chair reminded the public that following the administrator report was the public comment period. He requested that if anyone had a comment to make, to please use the hand raise function. Chair Garrelts then turned the floor over to Nancy Hirsch, EFCC Administrator.

Her report focused on the audit season that had recently finished. She noted that the 2024 fire season had been discussed in many different ways, and most people were familiar with the gross costs being over \$300 million. It was approximately three times the average fire season cost, and referenced it as, "more than epic." With that in mind, she started her report with recognitions and appreciation of all the work that went into the audit season.

She thanked Lorna Hobbs, who worked diligently for months acquiring, tracking and organizing all the reports, claims and links to district specific fires. She organized all the audits, auditing and tracking any findings. Nancy also noted that she does all of this without requiring direction- she works very well independently and closes all loops. She then thanked the area accountants (Jerilee Johnson and Anthony Texeira) for their expertise in creating all of the pre-audit and audit reports for each of the districts and EFCC. She thanked them for supporting the audit team as well. She thanked the Protection Finance Unit Manager Tracy Wrolson for being present and engaged and tracking estimated and actual costs, and for having an eye towards continuous improvement. She thanked the two Incident Business Advisors (Deanna Drinkwater and Alexis Webb) and the Tillamook District Business Manager (Debbie Queen) for all of their assistance in auditing. Lastly, she thanked the District and Association employees – specifically, the DBMs and their fiscal/administrative staff for their tremendous effort in tracking, organizing and managing documentation from the beginning to the end on over \$300 million in expenditures.

To give everyone a sense of what timekeeping, payment, and audit entails, Nancy went through the main considerations during a fire and audit season. All resources (firefighters, dozers, crews, etc.) are tracked with resource orders. Resources also have resource agreements and rates (IRA, VIPR, Fed Crew, CWN, etc.), emergency use agreements (equipment emergency 24-Hour, ICP, helibase, etc.), crew manifests, shift tickets, lend/lease documentation, and invoices (OF286/288 or invoice from resource). There are general messages tied to all of the situations on a fire that may not go as expected, which provides documentation to explain the rationale and context for different decisions. There are also documents tied to resource expenses (i.e. fuel receipts, air travel itinerary, rental cars), travel/expense claims, shuttle records, mileage reports, SPOTS packages, billing memos (i.e. severity retardant), expense corrections, and expense RPAs/POs. She wanted to give credit for the level of detail that the District Business Managers and their teams accomplished ahead of the audits.

Nancy also noted that John Davis and Eric Kranzush were able to join audits at several locations as new committee members, and she thanked them for doing so.

Audit Results were described in one word – exceptional. It was an exceptional year in financial accountability and responsibility from the costliest fire season on record. She noted that ODF and the Associations have dedicated fiscal and administrative employees, and they are getting very well practiced in the professional jobs they do. The audit results demonstrated precision and correctness of financial information that seems impossible given what they were handed in workload, scope and scale. She offered congratulations on a job well done.

She was able to be in person for eight of the nine audits (CFPA was done virtually). As the committee is aware, audits also include a breakout with District/Association leadership and operational staff. They touched on several topics that included strategic investments, fire cost recoveries and successful fire stops. She highlighted the Durkee fire in Northeast Oregon and the successes that were had utilizing local surge resources for a quick response. At 290,000 acres, it would have been easy to overlook the aggressive response because the fire grew so quickly, but she wanted to point out that the surge resources in coordination with the CIMT established and held key portions of the fireline. Acres burned, firefighting costs, and threats to the public and firefighter safety were all minimized as a result. She also highlighted the I-5 SB MM 11.5 fire in Southwest Oregon. It was in September of a very busy fire season, which meant limited resource availability. At the time, there was only one type 2 crew available to respond. I5 southbound had to be closed and level 2 and 3 evacuations were ordered, but an aggressive initial attack by numerous local agencies contained the fire at 13 acres despite the extreme fire behavior. The structures within the fire footprint were protected, and I5 was reopened by 7:00 p.m. which was a great success. Nancy also had a video regarding the Battle Mountain Complex and Rail Ridge fire that was unable to be played due to technical issues that she later forwarded to the committee. She continued that considering the drawdown on resources statewide during the 2024 fire season there were a lot of successful fire stops that didn't make the front page. She stated that she would include those in the full Audit Report that will be presented to the committee in January.

Next Nancy reported on Strategic Investments. She noted the Chair's comment regarding seeing their completion, and wanted to mention that she had met one-on-one with several district staff engaged in the SI projects, particularly the detection cameras. ODF had a shorter timeline with the strategic dollars that came from the legislature last year, which put time constraints and not enough capacity to complete everything. Having said that, many districts were well on their way to completion with some waiting on things like lease agreements to be signed or county approvals.

She continued to discuss the Agency Administrator training that Ron discussed earlier in the meeting. She stated that ODF did a really great job with that training. She highlighted the importance of the role given the capacity of District Foresters and District Managers with the scope and scale of the previous fire season. The South Cascade District dealt with 28 different incident management teams over the summer. Northeast Oregon District had 11 incident management teams, and hosted all three of ODF's IMTs at the same time. Central Oregon District inbriefed 28 IMTs over the summer, and six Type 3 IMTs. The Agency Administrator role is critical relative to IMT inbriefing and making sure that they understand the ODF and Oregon way of fighting fire. They ensure daily engagement in meetings and future planning with the IMT, and ultimately hold the IMT accountable. She gave a shout out to the tremendous effort made by Agency Administrators and Deputy Agency Administrators throughout the season.

Lastly, she acknowledged the discussion surrounding federal counterparts. One of the things she wanted to take note of was that in many conversations she had, an important topic was that many Type 3 IMTs were getting really challenged on the logistical and planning front. With the previously mentioned 1600 federal positions, that's going to continue to put a strain on districts being able to go from an extended initial attack to a Type 3 that would get them the additional support they need.

Chair Garrelts thanked her for her report and echoed her remarks of appreciation to everyone regarding the audits. He noted that finance is not the part of firefighting that makes the news, and it is incredibly important that people get paid for their hard work. He also noted the complexity when considering the involvement with FEMA, the WOOP, and the Forest Service. He expressed genuine thanks from the committee and asked that those listening to the call pass it along to their staff. He also thanked Nancy and Lorna for all of their hard work.

ITEM 10: PUBLIC COMMENT / GOOD OF THE ORDER

The floor was opened for public comment and good of the order, with direction for anyone wishing to make a public comment to please use the hand raising function or turn their video on as an indicator. No such indications were made.

Eric Kranzush moved to adjourn the meeting. As he did so, Peggy Lynch identified herself as a member of the League of Women Voters of Oregon. She had been unable to get into the meeting via Teams and called in. She expressed thanks for the meeting today and what she learned from each presenter. She also expressed support of ODF funding that works for all Oregonians and that she hoped to see that happen during the Legislative Session. She again expressed appreciation of the committee and the information it provides.

There being no further business before the committee and no additional comments, Chair Garrelts adjourned the meeting at 11:37 a.m. The next regular meeting of the Emergency Fire Cost Committee will be held at **10:00 a.m. on Tuesday, September 2, 2025** at the Oregon Department of Forestry Headquarters in Salem and via Teams Video Conferencing.

Minutes drafted by: Kelsey Ramos
Minutes reviewed by: Nancy Hirsch