

Statement to the Board of Forestry  
December 11, 2002

**Re: ODF funding levels: Effect on Family landowners**

Dear Sir/Madam

On behalf of Oregon Small Woodland Association I have been asked to give you an assessment of how our members and other family landowners would be affected if the proposed budget cuts were implemented for this biennium. OSWA has two main concerns both of which are equally weighted.

1. Fire Protection would be reduced below adequate levels

As the board is fully aware we have seen wildfires burn over one million acres of Oregon forest over the past year. The effects of the fires included a reduction in air quality affecting health of its citizens, lost revenue from forest product sales and tourism which in turn lead to long term jobs losses within these sectors, large scale changes within wildlife habitats and a loss of canopy cover that helps ensure water quality and temperature. There is a risk that without a major and rapid change in federal management practices or a major change in current weather patterns over the winter we could see similar losses next year.

Despite these risks and thanks to critical services provided by Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF), family landowners are still able to protect their lives, forests and homes. It is therefore disturbing for family landowners that under HB 5100, the Department of Forestry fire protection program would be facing cuts from general funds. The current cuts would save 1.4 million dollars of General Funds but results in an ODF loss of approximately \$6 million as these monies are tied to other funding levels. For fire program every general fund dollar removed from the ODF budget, another \$3.18 is effectively withdrawn.

This would lessen the ability of the Department to provide adequate fire protection to below levels as required by statute. Last year 44% of total fires occurred on state protected lands but only burnt 10% of total acreage effected due to efficient and effective initial attack. Those lands include our lands and we have different priorities and therefore fire prevention and protection requirements to that of say federal lands. "Let it burn" is not an economically, socially or environmentally viable option for many of us for Oregon.

2. Forestry Assistance Programs would be reduced

Related to our first concern I would suggest that prevention is the best form of cure. As part of their every day work service and assistance foresters help prevent fires by informing family landowners of fire prevention programs such as Senate Bill 360 aimed at creating defensible space around high risk interface homes. ODF has been efficient at making best use of its staff resources including service foresters, who often fill vital fire fighting roles during the fire season.

Finally service foresters can provide first step advice and links to other organizations that aid wise management of family lands. This education in turn leads to many tangible and non tangible social, economical and environmental benefits for all Oregonians. Any cut made to Service Forestry would mean that we would lose many of these leveraged benefits

Conclusion and a vision for the future

On behalf of all those who live, work, and enjoy Oregon's forests, we ask the Board to recommend to the Legislature that they remove the ODF's budget cuts made for this Biennium in so that adequate levels of funding for fire protection and landowner assistance programs remain in place. The potential risks to Oregon's forests and its citizens are not worth the potential saving.

In the long term, we would ask that you recommend a rapid increase in funding for fire protection, forest management education and market support services that aid the family landowners of our state so they can not only survive, but thrive. In particular, we are concerned about the funding of forestry assistance programs.

OSWA looks forward to working with the Board, Legislature, watershed councils and other stake holders to find ways to promote our forests and the products and services derived from them in the world and domestic markets. We feel there is a tremendous potential to sell the state and its natural resource heritage to others based upon our cutting edge legal protections, protected areas and reputation for wise forest management.

Sincerely,

Mike Gaudern

Executive Director

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Oregon Small Woodlands Association

### **Gaps in Public Funding of Natural Resources in Oregon.**

What the public pays for:

The percentage of general fund dollars received by natural resource departments has decreased during the past decade.

In the 1989-91 biennium, general funding levels for departments working in the natural resource sector was 1.83% of which 25% was allocated to Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF)

In the current biennium general funding level for departments working in the natural resource sector is now 1.47% of which ODF receives around 21.8%

What the public receives

Over the past decade public demands for services provided by public and private woodland has increased.

Oregonians' demands in both traditional (wood consumption) and non-traditional social values (forestry for aesthetics) are up. For example, OFRI started program 2000 to train both ODF foresters and others in how to design harvest units to take into consideration aesthetic values of surrounding communities.

Vitality in Oregon's public, private, and tribal natural resource clusters -- marine, water, forest, agriculture, recreation -- is the foundation of Oregon's prosperity.

The total natural resource clusters in the state currently provide \$25.9 billion or 13.9% of state total industrial output (TIO) and 268,750 jobs or 12.9% of state total.

They also provide ecosystem services that have economic value, but are not traded in markets: For example, Oregon's landscapes, clean water, salmon, air quality, soil protection, biodiversity and carbon storage.

The forest cluster sector generates \$12.8 billion total industrial output, 6.9% of state TIO, and 75,500 living wage jobs; 3.6% of state totals annually.

Due to our diverse goals that fluctuate over time, family forest landowners are responsible for providing many of the non-marketable benefits and therefore need public assistance to pay for education services to help us manage our land. By their very diversity we are able to fulfill an adaptive active management role at landscape level.

#### Conclusion

The economic rewards alone from the natural resources cluster and the state's spending on natural resources do not match. When combined with the environmental and social benefits, Oregon receives bountiful from its natural resource spending.

It is time for our leaders to take the necessary steps to ensure a more equitable approach in providing public funds to the natural resource cluster that reflect and protect the social, environmental and economic services the natural resource cluster provides.

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