

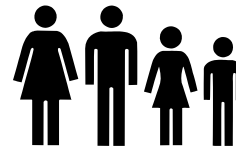
Committee for Family Forestlands

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Oregon Legislature
FROM: Committee for Family Forestlands (CFF)
DATE: April 14, 2011
RE: Support for the Oregon Department of Forestry's 2011-13 Budget Requests

The Committee for Family Forestlands (CFF) would like to go on record as strongly supportive of the Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) and generally supportive of the Department's budget request. Specifically, the CFF notes that, in ODF's Private Forest Program, there just is nowhere left to cut.

The CFF, a standing committee commissioned by the Oregon legislature to advise the State Forester and the Oregon Board of Forestry, includes members representing 70,000 family forestland owners in Oregon, environmental and industry interests, and the public. The CFF is concerned that solutions to the near-term budget crisis at a minimum do not diminish and at best enhance Oregon's long-term goals in forestry.

Of special concern to the CFF are protection from wildfire, robust enforcement of forest practices regulations (the Forest Practices Act), education in best management practices, and forestry assistance for small landowners. In Oregon, we have a history of shared responsibility for funding forestry programs roughly reflective of the mix of public and private values that are derived from forested landscapes. Traditionally the public through state government has worked as a partner with private landowners in funding these essential forestry services. Small forest owners are more than willing to continue contributing to this joint effort to protect one of Oregon's and the nation's great assets -- its forests -- but the public, via the budget, needs to uphold its end of the bargain, too.

Private forests provide significant public benefits for all Oregonians, including timber and wood products, economic vitality, recreational and esthetic opportunities, and community resilience as well as vital ecological benefits like clean water, clean air, and carbon sequestration. Because of the location of family forest holdings -- primarily in lowlands along waterways and roadways where most Oregonian's live, work and play -- family forestlands are at the leading edge of ensuring protection of Oregon's forests and farmlands. But family forestland owners are among those Oregonians who find themselves on the edge financially. Their location in the landscape makes them vulnerable to development and fragmentation pressures. Reductions in public funding of the programs ODF provides can result in a disincentive to own and manage private forestlands in Oregon. In this tough economy, we are seeing the results as more lands go out of forest use forever.

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The CFF appreciates the challenges faced by the Oregon Legislature, Governor, and ODF and the Board of Forestry in these turbulent economic times. The agency has carried out significant restructuring in the last several years to accommodate past budget reductions. These cuts have affected ODF's ability to retain and enhance professional expertise and to be available to those landowners and members of the public who look to ODF for help and protection. The CFF is mindful that all natural resources agencies in Oregon account for less than one percent of Oregon's general fund budget, and that the Oregon Department of Forestry represents only a fraction of that one percent. The proposed budget will maintain ODF's current ability to respond to the joint needs of the public and landowners with respect to forestry in Oregon and will allow the Department to begin to think about rebuilding.

In close, the Committee for Family Forestlands strongly supports the Oregon Department of Forestry and its work, which is key to successful forest management for small family landowners. We urge you to support the budget requests that allow this vital work not only to be maintained but to move forward in the next two years.

Sincerely,

Committee for Family Forestlands



Craig Shinn, Chair



Susan Watkins, Vice-Chair

cc: State Forester Doug Decker
Board of Forestry Chair John Blackwell

The Committee for Family Forests is a statutory committee appointed by the Board of Forestry and includes family forestland owners from different areas of the state, environmental organization and forest industry representatives, a citizen-at-large and ex-officio members representing the Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF), Extension Service, Oregon Forest Resources Institute, the Oregon Small Woodlot Association and logging or forestry consulting interests.