



Federal Forest Health Program

Budget Package 185

Collaboration and innovation to restore forest health and revitalize economies

What this budget request does

Oregon national forests are special places with diverse resources—fish and wildlife habitat, exceptional scenery, raw material vital to rural mills and the statewide economy, and more. Many agree, however, that these forests, particularly in drier regions, have grown unhealthy, unnaturally dense, and susceptible to severe wildfire, insects and disease—ultimately requiring restoration for increased resiliency.

Pioneering work is already underway. Local collaborative groups have brought diverse interests together to find solutions to restoration challenges. The resulting projects have begun to enhance forest health and help revitalize rural economies. This package builds on these successes, expanding capacity to create partnerships and advance projects.

Responding to the Governor’s proposed 2013-2015 budget, the 2013 Legislature made Oregon the first state in the nation to invest in national forest management, with a \$2.88 million allocation. This provided critical resources for bringing Oregonians with differing views together, helping to develop larger restoration projects at a faster pace. The Legislature’s investment has garnered national attention and put Oregon at the forefront of confronting these challenges.



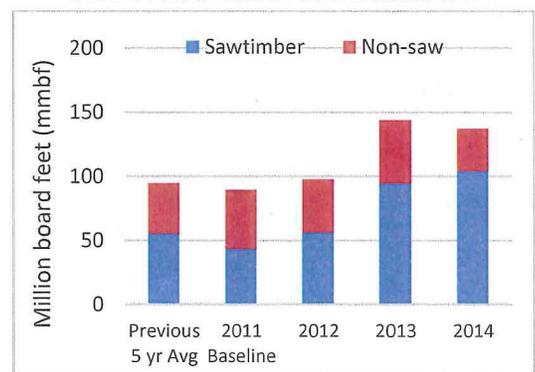
Past success, new opportunity

More opportunities exist to reconfigure business-as-usual and leverage efficiencies. The Governor’s proposed 2015-2017 budget would allow the Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) to act on new federal authorities provided in the 2014 Farm Bill to forge partnerships between the state and the U.S. Forest Service (USFS). Together, public agencies and local collaborative groups can increase the pace and scale of restoration and management, watershed health, and resilience to wildfire, while providing saw timber and economic opportunity in rural Oregon.

Oregon’s 2013 investment has put boots on the ground and yielded results quickly.

- **Supported jobs in rural communities:** In total, \$1.3 million of state “implementation investments” supported 19 jobs and generated \$2.1 million in economic impact in eastern Oregon. ODF seasonal employees completed pre-timber sale layout work on 2,300 acres. In the Blue Mountain region, state investments contributed to a 54% increase in USFS timber sold.
- **Gathered new data and streamlined processes:** State funds acquired 277,000 acres of aerial forest data, contracted required botany surveys for priority projects, and contracted professional surveyors to identify private-public ownership boundaries. State funds leveraged \$8.8 million in additional federal investment for this work.

USFS Timber Sold in Blue Mountains



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2015-17 investment: sustaining momentum and looking ahead



- **Enhanced partnerships and collaboration:** State and federal investment provided grants to nine local collaborative groups for technical assistance, governance for regional restoration projects, and strategic guidance for projects statewide. One highlighted success is the grant provided to the Wallowa-Whitman Forest Collaborative Group to build agreement on the 98,000 acre Lower Joseph Creek project. The USFS completed environmental analysis for this project four times the typical size in three times faster than the national average.

In 2015-2017, ODF proposes establishing a *Federal Forest Health Program* to invest \$6.05 million for expanding initial restoration work statewide, supporting local collaborative groups that demonstrate results and readiness, and acting on the Good Neighbor Authority granted in the 2014 Farm Bill. This provision allows the USFS and the Bureau of Land Management to authorize state foresters to implement forest management activities on federal forestlands. This 2015-2017 investment would:

- **Boost collaboration statewide:** Provide grants and contracts for forest collaborative work to enhance capacity, provide technical assistance, and provide new data for planning and on-the-ground projects. The Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) will continue as ODF's implementing partner for collaborative grants.
- **Use the Good Neighbor Agreement Plan to increase projects:** Fund both seasonal and permanent ODF staff as "implementation partners" for setting restoration projects in motion, and ensure return on state investment (7.6 full-time equivalent positions). Contracts would test innovative efficiencies and best practices to complete required environmental analysis.
- **Ensure success:** Less than 10% of funds would be spent on administration. These funds would connect statewide efforts and provide ODF capacity to develop agreements, oversee contracts, and monitor results. A small portion of the package would provide similar capacity to OWEB.
- **Set results-focused targets for 2015-2017:** State investment would provide additional capacity to the Federal Forest Health Program to evaluate progress and set targets, including establishment of statewide goals; increasing economic impact (e.g. jobs and economic support) from restoration work; increasing timber volume sold and under contract; increasing habitat quality and watershed health; and leveraging additional federal investment and process efficiencies.

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