

Agenda Item No.:	B
Work Plan:	Fire Protection Work Plan
Topic:	Ongoing Topic: Rangeland Protection Association Formation
Presentation Title:	Hearing Request for a Rangeland Protection Association in Western Harney County
Date of Presentation:	March 4, 2015
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SUMMARY

The purpose of this agenda item is to obtain Board approval to proceed with a public hearing on the subject of providing protection from fire for rangelands in the vicinity of western Harney County, Oregon.

CONTEXT

This is part of the Department’s ongoing effort, pursuant to ORS 477.320, to assist rural communities in eastern Oregon to develop wildland fire protection coverage in areas that are currently unprotected.

Several representatives of rangeland owners in western Harney County, have requested the Board hold a public hearing on the subject of providing protection from fire for rangelands in the vicinity of Wagontire (Attachment 1).

BACKGROUND AND ANALYSIS

Rangelands in eastern Oregon present a concern to Forest Protection Districts because of the lack of fire protection. Fires starting on these lands, left uncontrolled, have frequently threatened or spread to forestlands protected by the Department. This creates a dilemma for the district and potential use of district resources on unprotected lands that do not financially support the protection district.

The 2004 Fire Program Review identified assisting local communities in developing fire protection on unprotected lands as a high priority. Rangeland Protective Associations have been formed in Ash Butte, Blue Mt., Brothers Hampton, Burnt River, Crane, Fields-Andrews, Frenchglen, Gateway, Ironside, Jordan Valley, Juntura, Lookout Glasglow, Lone Pine, Post Paulina, Silver Creek, Twickenham, Vale, and Warner Valley.

The area the private landowners are considering for fire protection is interspersed with other land management agencies.

Although the emphasis is protection of private lands, opportunities will exist for partnerships and mutual aid agreements with other entities to strengthen wildland fire protection throughout the area.

RECOMMENDATION

The Department recommends the Board approve the landowners' request to hold a public hearing on the subject of providing protection from fire for rangelands in western Harney County, Oregon.

NEXT STEPS

The Department will hold a public hearing and determine the support for providing fire protection in western Harney County, Oregon. If there is sufficient support, a request will be made from the landowners to the Board to determine whether the rangeland should be included within a protection system.

If the Board determines that the rangeland should be included in a rangeland protection system, the Board, in cooperation with interested persons, will establish the extent and type of protection to be provided. Such protection shall be commensurate with the values and uses of the rangeland to be protected.

ATTACHMENT

(1) Letter from rangeland owners in western Harney County