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Fire Chief Michael Kinkade  
Forest Grove Fire & Rescue  
Testimony to Oregon Board of Forestry

Chair Imeson, Members of the Board:

My name is Michael Kinkade. I am the Fire Chief of Forest Grove Fire & Rescue, Cornelius Fire Department and the Gaston Rural Fire District. My departments serve a diverse geography, spanning from the edge of the greater Portland metro area to the eastern slopes of the Coast Range Mountains. We provide combination services including fire protection, emergency medical services, rescue, and public education on fire safety.

I appear before you today to offer a better sense of the role of timber revenues in helping us effectively protect Forest Grove and the rural communities that make up the Forest Grove Rural Fire Protection District. Let me be clear - these revenues make up a substantial portion of our budget and further reductions in revenues would reduce our ability to protect the public and the forest surrounding my communities. I am therefore also appearing today to encourage adoption of a timber management plan that will provide for adequate revenues for local services in the years to come.

My departments are responsible for covering approximately 80 square miles of territory including Gales Creek, Dilley, and Verboort. Forest Grove Fire & Rescue is the primary response department for the eastern slopes of the Tillamook Forest under an automatic and mutual aid agreement with the Oregon Department of Forestry. This means that from October to June my forces are the first responders protecting these forests. The funds we receive through the timber trust program covers the capital expenses for this fire equipment. The last three fire apparatus we have purchased (one is to be delivered any day now) are a Type III Heavy Brush truck, a Type VI Light Brush truck, and a Type I 3000 gallon water tender. These are the apparatus we use to protect our rural farms, industries and homes, and the Tillamook Forest. We used revenue from the timber trust to purchase this equipment. Reductions in revenue will force cuts to capital expenditures – risking our ability to protect these forestlands.



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In today's environment, public agencies like ours accept tight budgets as an everyday reality. I serve as the Fire Chief of three departments in three separate jurisdictions in order to operate efficiently with the least expense. We work hard to stretch our dollars and ensure the public is protected. I think we do a good job at it, but we depend on stable sources of revenue to maintain those services and make the capital expenditures to meet the growing needs in our district. The growth of Washington County and increases in wildland-urban interface residences, will put increased demands on our agency in the coming years. A plan that takes more acres out of active management will put greater burdens on firefighting agencies like mine to suppress and control wildfires when they break out.

The forestry management plans adopted by this Board will have a direct impact on the revenue generated for my agency, as well as a host of other county and local services provided across Oregon's timber trust counties. I urge you to consider carefully decisions to place more state forestlands off limits to active management. Protecting the long-term health of these forests is important to preserving our environmental legacy - but so is ensuring that first responders, like the agencies I represent, can contain fires that threaten these ecosystems. The wildfire last year at Hagg Lake, which all of my agencies responded to and became a declared State conflagration, is an excellent reminder of the danger a quickly spreading fire can pose to our forestlands unless they are effectively contained. In recent years, reduced harvests on state forestlands have already shrunk budgets. We need to look at management plans like the proposed 70/30 plan that will restore our obligations to support services in Oregon's timber counties and protect the public.

Thank you for your time today.