

Committee for Family Forestlands

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June 4, 2015

Dear Chair Imeson and Members of the Board of Forestry:

I am pleased to be able to present the 2015 Annual Report of the Committee for Family Forestlands (CFF). The Report details the CFF's accomplishments and endeavors over the 2014-15 year and lays out a proposed path forward for the coming year.

The CFF is a committee you appoint to advise you about matters that affect small forestlands and their owners and also to assist the Department of Forestry in shaping programs and gathering information. Many of our efforts result in letters to you, offering our advice and recommendations about work you are undertaking. In addition, the CFF is an active group that often takes on its own projects. The Report describes both types of activities.

Highlights of the 2014-15 year include:

A Forest Tax Symposium, held in January. The centerpiece of a two-year (to date) effort by the CFF, the Symposium featured legal, accounting, and land use experts who provided a landscape view of the tax issues facing small forest owners. The Symposium grew out of the CFF's realization in 2013 that Oregon had lost its once robust capacity to teach small forest tax competence to landowners. That particular deficiency was (partly) remedied last year when the Oregon State University (OSU) College of Forestry hired tax expert Dr. Tamara Cushing, who promptly joined our Symposium planning team. Though we were pleased with the Symposium's content and the sold-out attendance (nearly 300 landowners), the real work lies ahead: evaluation of the influence that tax education has on tax planning, and development of an appropriate ongoing education plan and outreach effort. In addition, the Committee expects to return to you with recommendations for additional steps the Board and Department can take to help landowners with tax and business issues.

The Ritter Private Lands Collaborative Pilot Project, ongoing. Born "RitterRx," the collaborative of private landowners in the Ritter area northwest of John Day has morphed into the Ritter Land Management Team, newly named by its landowning members. The collaborative, which grew out of a grant proposal developed by the CFF in (appropriately) collaboration with ODF's Jim Cathcart and others, is a three-year project designed to determine whether landowners working together can

improve their knowledge of forest management and their access to funding and infrastructure (operators, haulers, mills). Grant funds were used this year to hire an on-the-ground coordinator for the project, Curt Qual, who will be supervised by another new OSU hire, Dr. Emily Jane Davis. After putting the landowners in touch with the many local agencies in position to help with forestland productivity, the CFF is delighted to see the local group taking ownership of the collaborative. We expect more good news about this project in the year to come.

Water Quality issues, especially RipStream. The Committee's concerns about the potential impacts of a rule-making that might significantly enlarge riparian buffers on small and medium fish-bearing streams have been conveyed to the Board several times now. Family forestland owners are particularly concerned because our forests tend to be located lower in the watershed where fish may be more abundant, our smaller parcels may suffer a significant decrease in harvestable lands from even a relatively small increase in buffer size, and inadequacies in our knowledge about how to manage in a riparian area leaves us with few options other than "no touch" -- not always the best practice if stream improvement is the goal. We will be presenting our view of the various prescriptions proposed to remedy the Protecting Cold Water criterion deficiency at today's meeting, and we will continue to follow this issue in the year ahead.

The last "big issue" the CFF faced this past year was one of **recruitment**. Our past Chair, Dr. Craig Shinn, Citizen-at-Large representative, left huge shoes to fill when he stepped off the Committee last July. As you know, our Charter requires the Citizen-at-Large to be someone who does not own forestland; by tradition, that member is the Committee Chair and a faculty member at one of Oregon's universities. The Citizen-at-Large role is demanding; as noted above, we are an active group. After identifying several candidates with outstanding experience, qualifications, and interest in the CFF, we nominated Dr. Ed Weber, U. G. Dubach Professor of Political Science in the OSU School of Public Policy, whose appointment you confirmed in June. As the coming year unfolds, I think we will all discover that, under Ed's guidance, the CFF will continue to tackle issues of importance to small forest owners and to forestry in general, with energy and enthusiasm.

The Committee will also greet new voting members Evan Barnes, landowner representing the Southern Region, and John Peel, landowner at large, whose property is in Eastern Oregon; and ex-officio members Jim James, Executive Director of the Oregon Small Woodlands Association (OSWA), who takes over the small forest landowner group position, and a new OSU College of Forestry representative still to be determined. In addition, Cindy Glick of the US Forest Service will continue in the public land manager slot. In addition to myself (landowner at large), we are losing voting member Rick Barnes, landowner and professional forester, and ex-officio members Joe Holmberg of Oregon Tree Farm System and Brad Withrow-Robinson, OSU College of Forestry Extension. Although their input will be sorely missed, we trust that the new members will continue the high caliber effort and collaborative style that CFF work has come to represent.

On behalf of myself and the Committee, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Doug Decker for making himself and his excellent staff available to us. We couldn't do our work without that assistance. I also wish to thank Jim Johnson and the OSU College of Forestry not only for giving us an Extension agent to advise and assist us on a regular basis, but also for making other faculty and staff available on particular issues as well as entire years-long projects. Jim James and OSWA have also stepped up with invaluable advice and assistance whenever we have asked. Lena Tucker, Deputy Chief Private Forests Division and CFF secretary, and Susan Dominique, CFF staff, kept our meetings

running smoothly and ensured that the right people were available to inform our decisions and advice. We have also had the pleasure of hosting Board Member Gary Springer and, in past years, other Board Members at our meetings, and we invite each of you to attend and see firsthand what we are about.

Finally, a personal note. The delay in finding a new Chair led to a rewarding experience for me; I became the CFF's Acting Chair, a position I anticipated holding for a short time but which ultimately grew to encompass the entire year. This was an opportunity I never expected, and I thank you for it. I also wish to thank Board Member Gary Springer and Private Forests Division Chief Peter Daugherty for "recruiting" me to serve; former Board Member Peter Hayes for encouraging my interest in forestry policy; and former CFF Chair Craig Shinn for paving a way for me to lead.

My two terms on the Committee have been extremely rewarding personally. I have had the privilege and pleasure of working with some of the finest people in forestry, on the ODF staff and on the CFF. My greatest pleasure and the CFF's comes from the knowledge that the Board and State Forester take our advice seriously and seek it out when new issues arise. I hope the attached Report answers your questions about family forestland owners' concerns over the past year; if it does not, please do not hesitate to direct those questions to the CFF.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Susan Watkins".

Susan Watkins, Committee for Family Forestlands Acting Chair