



# Oregon

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## Department of Forestry

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"STEWARDSHIP IN FORESTRY"

## NEWS RELEASE

### Deschutes County Forestland Classification Process Begins

For Immediate Release  
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A group of local landowners and agency representatives are studying the private and non-federal public lands within Deschutes County for the purpose of determining which of those lands are to be protected from wildfire by the Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF). The Deschutes County Forestland Classification Committee was convened by the Board of County Commissioners at the request of Oregon's State Forester. The committee will hold their first meeting on November 5, 2014 from 6 to 8 p.m. at the Deschutes County Road Department building located at 61150 SE 27<sup>th</sup> Street in Bend.

The Classification Committee is charged with determining which lands within Deschutes County meet the definition of forestland as described in Oregon law. Lands determined to be forestlands are assigned a classification based on their productivity. This information is used to determine where ODF is required to provide wildland fire protection services, and to determine which lands are subject to an annual forest patrol assessment. For private landowners, this assessment is included in their annual property tax statement.

"It has been over forty years since this work was last done," explained Kristin Dodd, Central Oregon Assistant District Forester for ODF. "The landscape has changed a fair amount in Deschutes County over that timeframe, and as a result where we fight fire should as well."

Committee membership is directed by state statute. The members appointed to the Deschutes County Forestland Classification Committee are Nicole Strong, OSU Extension; Kristin Dodd, Oregon Department of Forestry; Jeremy Ast, Sisters-Camp Sherman Fire District; Ed Keith, Deschutes County Forester; Bill Swarts, timber landowner representative for Cascade Timberlands; and Matt Cyrus, Grazing landowner representative for Keith Cyrus, owner.

The forestland classification process is intended to be open and transparent. All meetings of the Classification Committee are open to the public and time for public comment is

included on each meeting agenda. The committee will hold meetings regularly and each meeting will be advertised in advance. Meeting agendas, minutes and other work products are being posted on the web at [www.oregon.gov/odf.centraloregon/deschutesflc](http://www.oregon.gov/odf.centraloregon/deschutesflc).

The classification process is anticipated to take about two years. During this time the Classification Committee will review aerial imagery of the county, site productivity data, and other information to make its preliminary classifications. Once this preliminary work is complete, a series of public information meetings will be held to provide the public and landowners opportunities to review the Forestland Classification Committee's preliminary findings and proposed maps and to ask questions regarding the forestland classification process. All affected landowners will receive a written invitation to these meetings. The committee may make changes to their initial findings based on landowner input received at these meetings.

"There will be potential impacts to landowners as a result of this process. However, we want the classification to be fair and equitable to those receiving and paying for fire protection within the District," Dodd said.

Before finalizing the forestland classifications, the Committee will also conduct a formal Public Hearing for the purpose of receiving oral or written testimony from affected landowners. This hearing will mark the start of a two-week public comment period. After the public comment period, the Committee will finalize its work, having taken comments into consideration and file a written order with the County Clerk. Once the order is filed, any person aggrieved by the classification process has 30 days in which to file an appeal with the county Circuit Court.

The agenda for the kickoff meeting will include a presentation on the history of fire protection in Oregon and locally, address the need for this effort and explain the process. It will then be followed by the Committee's first meeting in which they will elect officers, adopt their by-laws and establish subsequent meeting date(s).

More information may be obtained by calling Kristin Dodd at (541) 447-5658 extension 229.

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