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**Committees**

Joint Committee on Carbon Reduction—Co Vice Chair

Joint Ways & Means Committee on Natural Resources

Agriculture & Land Use

Natural Resources

OREGON STATE LEGISLATURE
900 COURT ST NE SALEM, OREGON 97301**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****Thursday, April 25, 2019****CONTACT: Shelia Megson****Chief of Staff****503-986-1401**Shelia.Megson@oregonlegislature.gov**Good Neighbor Authority Improving Federal Forests**

Good Neighbor Authority allows the Oregon Department of Forestry to partner with the U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management to increase forest management activities to improve forest health, enhance wildlife and aquatic habitat, assure recreational opportunities, and support rural economies

Salem, Oregon (April 25, 2019) – Last summer's wildfires affected every corner of Oregon. The fires consumed nearly 700 thousand acres, costing state, federal, local, tribal and private entities more than \$340 million to suppress. This doesn't include the immeasurable loss of homes, tourism dollars, recreational amenities and natural resources. The fires also had the negative impact to our health care system through increased emergency room visits and hospital admissions as many Oregonians suffered from wildfire smoke.

Over 90 percent of the acres burned occurred on land under the firefighting jurisdiction of the U.S. Forest Service, and the 2018 fire season is only a preview of what's to come. That's because a majority of Oregon's forest land is owned by the federal government and much of it is classified as being at high risk of catastrophic wildfire. Recognized the danger and risk, Representatives' Daniel Bonham (R-The Dalles) and David Brock Smith (R-Port Orford) introduced and passed with strong bipartisan majorities HB 4118 to improve management of Oregon's federally owned forests, boost rural Oregon's economy and protect Oregonians from the impacts of catastrophic wildfire. House Bill 4118 was a solution that ensures that Oregonians' tax dollars are used wisely toward our goal of increasing the pace and scale of forest restoration in our state.

"Millions of acres of federally-owned forest lands in Oregon need fuels reduction and restoration work right now. Unfortunately, due to a lack of funding and personnel, federal land management agencies are struggling to increase the pace and scale of treatments. Good Neighbor Authority allows the Oregon Department of Forestry to partner with the U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management to increase forest management activities to improve forest health, enhance wildlife and aquatic habitat, assure recreational opportunities, and support rural economies," Co-Chief Sponsor Daniel Bonham (R-The Dalles) explains. "Forests are an economic driver. Restoring the health and resilience of our forests generates important values as well as economic benefits."

"With the advent of the Good Neighbor Authority, our accomplishments on the ground are significantly increasing and I expect them to grow much more in the next few years," said Chad Davis the Director of Partnership & Planning Program for the Oregon Department of Forestry in the House Natural Resources Committee today. "We've invested the majority of state funds in increasing the pace of project approval and implementation. By using contractors to collect necessary data to feed into the environmental planning process and then ODF employees, particularly firefighters on the shoulders of fire seasons, to put paint on trees to increase treatment. The Good Neighbor Authority, in terms of dollars, is the largest component of our Federal Forest Restoration Program and is poised to increase significantly over the next biennium."

Co-Chief Sponsor David Brook Smith expanded, "GNA represents an important opportunity to protect our communities from the risk of catastrophic wildfire. It can also provide additional wood fiber to support Oregon-grown employers in the forest sector. This important policy tool helps protect and create desperately-needed jobs in rural Oregon. The Oregon Forest Resources Institute estimates one million board feet of wood harvested supports 11 jobs in our state. With two recent mill closures in Southwest Oregon, GNA can provide additional wood fiber to restore job creation and economic opportunity in our forest communities."

Building on the success of last sessions HB 4188, Rep. Daniel Bonham (R-The Dalles) and Rep. David Brook Smith (R- Port Orford)) introduced HB 2952 and HB 2953 to expand accountability and transparency within Good Neighbor Authority moving forward. HB 2953 has passed the House of Representatives and is awaiting Senate action. HB 2952 has passed the House Committee on Natural Resources and is currently in the Joint Committee of Ways and Means. Forests provide a broad range of values and benefits, including biodiversity, recreation, clean air and water, forest products, erosion control, soil renewal and more. Together these bills sustain the health, resilience and productivity of our nation's forests and provide a critically important tool to maintaining these values and benefits.

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Rep. David Brock Smith represents House District 1, which includes Curry, Coos, Douglas and Josephine counties. This press release and an archive of previous press releases issued by Rep. David Brock Smith's office are available on the web at: www.oregonlegislature.gov/smithd