



# PRESS RELEASE

REP. PAM MARSH & REP DAVID BROCK SMITH  
HOUSE DISTRICT 5 & HOUSE DISTRICT 1

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For Immediate Release  
May 9, 2019

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## **Bi-Partisan Wildfire Mitigation Funding Package Gains Momentum**

### ***Legislators Join Together to Support the Oregon Forest Fire and Resilience Investment Package***

**Salem, OR.** – As Oregon prepares for another wildfire season, state legislators from both parties are joining together to support a bipartisan, common-sense funding package that serves to create resilient landscapes and fire-adapted communities, while also providing a safe and effective wildfire response.

“The recent wildfires in Oregon have revealed a need for more firefighting resources and the development of community and landscape resiliency,” explained Rep. Pam Marsh (D-Southern Jackson County). “We can greatly enhance fire protection capacity within the Oregon Department of Forestry and make smart investments for reducing fire risk and smoke impacts, while creating and sustaining healthy forests and communities. There are critical, near-term investments that will leverage partnerships between state and federal governments, community leaders, forest collaboratives, and diverse expertise in the nonprofit and business communities,” she noted.

The bipartisan, four-part investment package: 1) invests in initial attack resources to keep fires small; 2) provides additional funding and staffing for the Oregon Department of Forestry to implement fire protection and preparedness in targeted, at-risk communities and landscapes, while investing in staff to protect forest resources and public safety; 3) funds and implements a “Community Resiliency and Smoke Impact Mitigation Grant Program” in at-risk communities; and 4) funds a landscape analysis of wildfire risk and develops mitigation strategies to help strategically target investments to reduce the risk to priority landscapes and associated communities. The package includes \$6.8 million to support these four components.

“Last summer, Southern Oregon suffered through six weeks of choking smoke and near misses,” said Rep Pam Marsh. “A month later we all watched from a distance as Paradise, California, a town much like many communities in our region, burned to the ground. Smoke and fire threaten Oregon’s health, economy, and future. We can and must act now to create more resilient communities and forests.”

Recent wildfires in Oregon have revealed a need for more firefighting resources and the development of community and landscape resiliency. Oregon wildfires cost a record \$514M in 2018, exceeding the record \$447M in 2017. [Trends and future projections](#) indicate strong

likelihood of hotter summers and extended fire seasons, continuing a trend in more large wildfires and associated wildfire smoke. Increased fire frequency threatens the intersection between homes and forested landscapes, known as the “wildland-urban interface,” and places human health and safety at risk.

“The Oregon Forest Fire and Resilience Investment Package mirrors the three goals of the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy,” said Rep David Brock Smith (R-Port Orford). “Those goals focus on creating resilient forest landscapes, fire adapted communities, and effective wildfire response to protect our residents. The package will also assist with implementation of our previous Good Neighbor Authority legislation. Oregon has a long way to go to achieve these objectives, but the Investment Package is a good step forward for our communities and their residents.”

“We cannot change the risk our communities face from uncontrolled wildfire overnight,” Rep. Marsh said. “But we can take science-based and solution-oriented steps now to restore our forests and reduce our communities’ exposure to wildfire and smoke. I invite my colleagues in Salem to join us in supporting the Oregon Forest Fire and Resilience Investment Package.”

The Oregon Forest Fire and Resilience Investment Package includes:

- **Forestry Department Staff for Fire Fighting, Preparedness, and Resource Protection:** ODF needs more resources to lead fire-fighting, engage landowners in preparing for fire, implement restoration treatments in at-risk forests, and ensure forest resources are protected during fire season and year-round. This package includes 21 positions to help meet these needs. Critical investments include resources across the agency, as recommended by the Secretary of State’s audit.
- **Community Resiliency and Smoke Impact Mitigation Grant Program:** This grant program will help communities plan and implement smoke mitigation strategies to protect vulnerable residents and to inform and educate citizens about the use of controlled fire as an essential forest management tool. Planning grants will identify smoke-sensitive communities/populations and possible mitigation measures for affected communities and individuals.
- **Landscape Analysis of Fire Risk and Mitigation Strategies:** In order to best tailor limited resources for the best outcomes for our communities and forests, we need to know the location of the most at-risk landscapes and resources. Funding will provide facilitation, community outreach and engagement, GIS mapping, economic analysis consultation, agency staffing, and other technical assistance as needed for the completion of a statewide landscape analysis to identify communities and forest resources at risk from wildfire, with an emphasis on immediate threats to human health and public safety.
- **Enhanced Front-line Resources:** Rapid suppression is vital to stopping large fires. More front-line resources are needed to get the job done.

For more information on the package, click the link below:

[Oregon Forest Fire and Resilience Investment Package](#)

More information is available upon request.

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**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

May 2019

**Requesting support for Oregon Forest Fire & Resilience Investment Package**

In the summer of 2017, Oregonians watched our beloved Columbia River Gorge go up in flames due to the carelessness of youth and late season east winds. Last summer, southern Oregon suffered through six weeks of choking smoke and near misses. A month later we all watched from a distance as Paradise, California, a town much like many communities in our region, burned to the ground. Smoke and fire threaten Oregon's health, economy, and future.

The gravity of our situation is reflected in the numbers. Oregon wildfires cost a whopping \$514 million in 2018 and that half billion is not the end of our troubles. Our fire seasons are longer than in the past, more ferocious, less predictable, and made worse by climate change. The cost and impacts of fire and smoke on our lives will increase.

The recent wildfires in Oregon have revealed a need for more firefighting resources and the development of community and landscape resiliency. We can greatly enhance fire protection capacity within the Oregon Department of Forestry and make smart investments for reducing fire risk and smoke impacts while creating and sustaining healthy forests and communities. There are critical, near-term investments that will leverage partnerships between the state and federal governments, community leaders, forest collaboratives, and diverse expertise in the nonprofit and business community.

We support a \$6.8 million budget package to fund four critical areas of need:

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We endorse the Oregon Forest Fire and Resilience Investment Package and urge its incorporation in the 2019-21 budget.



Rep Pam Marsh  
House District 5



Rep David Brock Smith  
House District 1



Rep Jack Zika  
House District 53



Rep Paul Evans  
House District 20



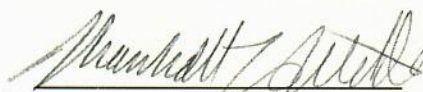
Rep Kim Wallan  
House District 6



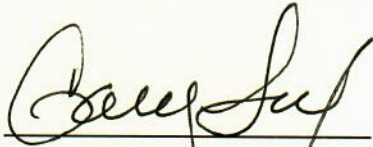
Rep Tiffany Mitchell  
House District 32



Rep Anna Williams  
House District 52




Rep Marty Wilde  
House District 11



Rep Gary Leif  
House District 02



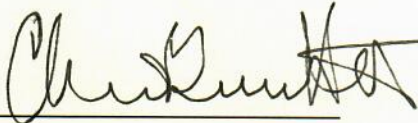
Sen Jeff Golden  
Senate District 3



Rep Brad Witt  
House District 31



Rep Andrea Salinas  
House District 38



Rep Cheri Helt  
House District 54



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Ashland Chamber of Commerce  
Chamber of Medford/Jackson County  
Jackson County Board of Commissioners  
KS Wild  
Lomakatsi Restoration Project  
Pacific Forest Trust  
Southern Oregon Climate Action Now  
Oregon Shakespeare Festival  
Southern Oregon Forest Restoration  
Collaborative  
Sustainable Northwest  
The Nature Conservancy  
Western Environmental Law Center  
Oregon League of Conservation Voters  
Wild Salmon Center  
Biomass One, LP  
Blue Mountains Forest Partners  
John Stromberg, Mayor of Ashland  
Sally Russell, Mayor of Bend  
Mark Bennett, Baker County Commissioner