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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**June 12, 2017****Contact: Mark Labhart,
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cell - 503-801-1704 1****State Representative David Brock Smith & U.S. Senator Jeff Merkley Release
Strategic Plan to Combat Sudden Oak Death**

*Hailing the end of an intensive three-month process, the Sudden Oak Death Task Force publishes their strategic action plan to contain *Phytophthora ramorum*, an invasive pathogen threatening the economies and environment of Southwest Oregon*

Salem, OR – Oregon State Representative David Brock Smith (R-Port Orford), Oregon U.S. Senator Jeff Merkley, co-conveners of the Sudden Oak Death Task Force, today announced the release of the group’s strategic action plan to address the spread of *Phytophthora ramorum* – commonly called Sudden Oak Death (or SOD) – in Southwest Oregon.

“The residents of Curry County, their communities and the industries that support them, can no longer rely on current treatment methods as an economically viable option. We must have enhanced research, better detection and more effective treatment methods,” Brock Smith said. “The people of Southwest Oregon are at risk of losing their homes to fire and their livelihoods. We cannot afford to lose as a region or state, our wood product, nursery and agriculture industries, or the export industries of the Port of Coos Bay. We must act now, and we must act swiftly. Billions of dollars in regional economic development are on the line.”

“The risk to our communities, economy and environment is too high to delay any longer in taking more aggressive action. The longer we wait, the more difficult and expensive this problem will be,” Merkley said. “That’s why over 100 experts – representing over 40 agencies, organizations, associations and companies – have come together to develop this plan to contain NA1 and eradicate EU1. I have pledged to do everything I can from the Senate’s Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee to help secure resources to support the task force’s action plan.”

Sudden Oak Death, caused by the non-native pathogen *Phytophthora ramorum* (*P. ramorum*), has killed hundreds of thousands of tanoaks in Curry County since it was first detected in an Oregon forest in 2001. Despite a containment program to slow the spread, the quarantine area administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture has grown from nine square miles to 515 square miles over the last 15 years and the disease continues to spread. Without more aggressive measures, the pathogen will continue to spread north into Coos County and west into Josephine County.

The majority of the SOD infestations found in Oregon's forests have been of the NA1 strain of *P. ramorum*, which predominately affects tanoaks, although repeated exposure can suppress new growth in conifer trees. Increasing the urgency is the recent detection of the EU1 strain of *P. ramorum* in Curry County, which has been known to kill conifer species in Europe. This strain has never before been detected in the United States.

Merkley and Brock Smith co-convened a broad alliance of stakeholders, staffed by the Association of Oregon Counties' County Solutions program, to develop a collaboration-based action plan, including the pursuit of adequate resources, to contain the NA1 pathogen and eradicate the EU1 pathogen using the best available science.

This strategic action plan is made up of the recommendations of six subcommittees of the Task Force. Each subcommittee focused on specific issue areas that need to be addressed, including (but not limited to):

- **Scientific research:** Prioritizing and funding new research to improve treatment, detection and monitoring of SOD, including determining pathogen host range and examining integrated pest management strategies, EU1 epidemiology and ecological and social impacts of living with SOD.
- **SOD Treatment:** Increasing state, federal and other funds in order to sufficiently contain NA1 and eradicate EU1 in Oregon.
- **All lands coordination:** Developing an interagency Memorandum of Understanding to implement collaborative SOD related projects across all ownerships and hiring an outreach coordinator to work with landowners.
- **Adaptation within the quarantine area:** Developing and implementing fire risk and prevention, transportation and recreation and restoration and conservation strategies, as well as best management practices in areas affected or likely to be affected by SOD.
- **Communications and civic engagement:** Hiring a marketing firm to develop a communications and civic engagement plan to begin implementing by January 2018.
- **Economic impact:** Hiring a consultant to conduct an economic impact study to evaluate the current and future economic impacts of SOD.
- **Workforce development:** Implementing workforce strategies to increase capacity for detection, treatment and monitoring of SOD.
- **Funding:** Forming an ongoing working group to identify and secure funding to implement landscape scale, place-based projects.

Anticipating potential cuts from the Oregon Department of Forestry's budget for the coming biennium, Representative David Brock Smith introduced House Bill 3151 to ensure the agency received the same level of funding for SOD detection, treatment and monitoring. As a result of the Task Force's efforts, the request was amended upward to \$1.7 million for the 2017-2019 biennium. Additional federal appropriations requests are also underway and other sources of revenue are being investigated to implement this plan.

Click [HERE](#) for a copy of the full Sudden Oak Death Task Force Strategic Action Plan.