

# Committee for Family Forestlands Annual Report to the Board Fiscal Year 2020-2021

*Annual Report presented to the Board of Forestry July 21, 2021  
By Evan Barnes, Chair, Committee for Family Forestlands*

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The Committee for Family Forestlands is a standing committee established by the Oregon Board of Forestry (BOF) to assist the State Forester and the Board on issues relevant to some 70,000 family forestland owners in the state on the formulation of policy and evaluation of effects that changes in forest policy have or will have on those lands.

The Committee for Family Forestlands (CFF) is pleased to provide a report of their activities over the past year (July 2020– June 2021). This report outlines the work of the Committee in gaining a thorough understanding of the issues at hand before the Board. Understanding filtered through their personal experiences enable members to feel confident in their ability to act in an advisory role and to be deserving of the Board’s trust that any recommendations made are backed up with considerable discussion and critical thought.

## **The 2020-2021 voting members:**

Evan Barnes, (Southern Oregon Family Forestland Owner) Chair, Voting Member  
Barrett Brown, (Northwest Oregon Family Forestland Owner) Voting Member  
John Peel, (Eastern Oregon Family Forestland Owner), Voting Member  
Kaola Swanson, (Conservation Community Representative) Voting Member/Vice Chair  
Mark Vroman, (Industry Representative) Voting Member  
Wendy Gerlach, (Citizen at Large), Voting Member  
Vacant, (Landowner At Large) Voting Member

## **CFF Membership Changes**

- Amanda Astor is the new ex-officio member (and new Forest Policy Manager) for Oregon Associated Loggers (AOL) as Rex Storm was promoted to Executive Vice President.
- Amy Jahnke took over for Jim James as the ex-officio member for Oregon Small Woodland Association (OSWA) their new Executive Director and Oregon Tree Farm System (OTFS) new Administrator.
- The Landowner-At-Large position remains vacant.
- Evan Barnes, CFF Chair and Southern Oregon landowner representative and John Peel, Eastern Oregon landowner representative completed their terms at the end of June.

## **Acknowledgments**

CFF's efforts would not be as well-informed without the Ex-Officio members whom are vital to the Committee. Voting members want to thank them for their contributions:

- Glenn Ahrens, OSU College of Forestry and Extension Ex-Officio.
- Janelle Geddes, Public Land Management/USFS State and Private Forestry Ex-Officio.
- Julie Woodward, Oregon Forest Resources Institute (OFRI) Ex-Officio.
- Amanda Astor, Oregon Associated Loggers (AOL) Ex-Officio.
- Amy Jahnke, Oregon Small Woodlands Association (OSWA) & Oregon Tree Farm System (OTFS) Ex-Officio.

Members acknowledge the support received from the Department as a whole, but specifically the Private Forests Division staff, Protection from Fire Division staff, Partnership and Planning Division staff, the State Forester, Board Chair, and members of the Board of Forestry.

In particular, members would like to thank:

- Andrew Owen, NRCS State Forester, for coming to present an overview of federal programs that provide fire recovery assistance.
- Blake Ellis, Fire Operations Manager, Fire Protection Division reporting on the 2020 Fire Season and Ron Graham, Deputy Chief of Operations, Fire Protection Division on the 2021 Fire Season Readiness and Outlook.
- Tom Fields, Fire Prevention Coordinator and Kristin Babbs, President of Keep Oregon Green leading discussion on the Drivers of Human Caused Forest Fires
- Alex Rahmlow, Operations and Policy Analyst, Federal Forest Restoration Program presenting on the recently funded Forest Resilience Projects
- Ryan Gordon, Family Forestlands Coordinator for his untiring commitment to assisting landowners through available incentive programs and his leadership on seedling availability and post-fire recovery.

## Chair's Introduction

*2021 has become the new "normal" as we pass the halfway mark of this year. I wonder what changes we will be compelled to make due to the ever-increasing effects of climate change with its impact on the private and public forests of Oregon.*

*We have gotten to know Doug Grafe on a first name basis as he and Ron Graham have briefed the committee many times on the past fire season statistics and next year's predictions. His presentations have become more dire with every passing year.*

*While the Committee has worked on an increasing number of important topics, the one message I would like to convey, and the BOF is aware of, is that our uncontrolled large fires are becoming bigger, burn with more intensity and are having a deadly impact on our citizens and firefighters. Questions of air quality from fires, even in the cities and towns that are hundreds of miles in the distance abound. The economic effects are being borne by these same areas as city dwellers are being advised to stay inside and many typical outdoor events are cancelled.*

*All the other contentious forest issues, including protected and endangered species, streamside buffers, sudden-oak death syndrome, water and air quality, aerial spraying, the dire shortage of tree seedlings, the latest progress on the Memorandum of Understanding pale in comparison to the large, uncontrolled fires that have become a way of life here in Oregon and elsewhere. I implore the Board of Forestry to roll up their sleeves and spend as much time and political capital as possible to lessen the forest fuels, work towards proactively building firebreaks, promote prescribed burning, and be a voice for increased funding of the severity program.*

*The following report provides an overview of the dedicated membership of the committee, a summary of key topics and recognition and appreciation of the tremendous efforts and hard work by the incredible staff of the Oregon Department of Forestry. THANK YOU. I expect that the committee will have a very productive 2022.*

*In closing this report will be the last one I will participate in as my two terms are up, and it is time to turn the reins over to a new chair and a Southern Oregon landowner representative.*

*Sincerely,*

*Evan Barnes, outgoing CFF Chair and Southern Oregon family forestland owner*

## 2020-2021 Priority Issues

The following are priority issues for the committee and their engagement over the past year on these topics.

### Post Fire Recovery

As soon as the 2020 wildfire suppression efforts were completed in Oregon, the State went into recovery mode, as over one million acres in Oregon were impacted by the fires. The State has developed an organizational structure at many levels to be able to deal with the short- and long-term recovery efforts. One key element of this structure has been the Natural and Cultural Resources Recovery Task Force co-convened by ODF, Department of Environmental Quality and Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, which includes participation from state and federal agencies as well as tribes. CFF members received regular updates on the work of the task force, including how natural resource recovery projects have been prioritized for possible State funding. In addition, the CFF heard about opportunities for federal assistance programs, including the Natural Resources Conservation Service's Environmental Quality Incentives Program and Emergency Watershed Protection Program, and the Farm Service Agency's Emergency Forest Restoration Program.

### Seed/Seedling Availability

Seed/seedling availability has been an ongoing area of focus for the CFF. Following the wildfires in 2020, the situation has been exacerbated as reforestation begins to occur across the vast fire-impacted landscape. In response, ODF has convened a seed and seedling workgroup made up of representatives from state and federal agencies, Oregon State University Extension Service, and non-governmental organizations. The workgroup is engaged in finding both short- and long-term solutions to the existing seedling shortage for small acreage forest landowners. Some CFF members are participating on this workgroup, and the committee has heard updates, and provided input, at every meeting following the 2020 wildfires.

### Labor Pool to Complete Fire Recovery for Family Forest Landowners

Workforce capacity to provide site preparation, seedling planting, and plant establishment is a significant limiting factor in wildfire and other natural disaster recovery efforts. The CFF has been updated on this topic and has engaged in the discussion as it involves many of the same individuals working on seedling availability. The CFF discussed solutions, including pooling contracts to allow for cross ownership reforestation activities that would allow for efficient distribution of labor.

### Database for Contacting Landowners

The need for effective landowner outreach is a key issue that the CFF is tracking. The importance of having a comprehensive small woodland owner database could serve many efforts and organizations. In the past year, CFF members have participated in a workgroup, and developed a landowner survey that will help build efforts to secure seedlings for family forestland owners impacted by wildfires and to conduct outreach about other recovery opportunities in the future.

### Habitat Conservation Plan for Private Lands

With the establishment of the Timber Industry and Environmental group Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), and passage of SB 1602, there is an expressed intent to establish a Private Forestlands Habitat Conservation Plan. The CFF understands that the negotiations are private at this time, urges those engaged in the process to be keep the Committee informed when the opportunity allows.

## Wildland/Urban Interface (WUI) Opportunities

CFF members agreed that wildland/urban interface issues will continue to be in the forefront of their work as family forestland owners with smaller acreages need the most assistance. To date there has been a lack of technical assistance capacity to adequately support those WUI areas. These small woodland owners are on the frontline of mitigating fires caused by human activity and it benefits the whole state to keep those lands engaged.

## Eastern Oregon Specific Needs

The CFF remains interested in learning more about the eastern Oregon infrastructure challenges and the diminishing ability for family forestland owners to be successful on the east side of the state. The CFF hopes to meet and hold a field tour in Eastern once travel restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic and budget have waned.

## Prescribed Fire

The CFF remains interested in the utilization of prescribed fire for family forestland owners. Issues associated with liability and technical expertise are two key limitations in the use of prescribed fire in Oregon. Partners are engaged with these issues, and will continue to update the CFF as developments occur in the use of prescribed fire in the state.

## Partnerships

Partner updates at each meeting provided timely announcements of programs both educational and informative as well as grant, and incentive program deadlines and opportunities. The partnerships illustrated by the ex-officio members have been key throughout the year in finding solutions to the needs of small woodland owners. Those partners are the real workforce the Committee counts on for boots-on-the-ground solutions.

## Other Areas of Interest

The committee is also interested in topics such as forest chemical use, climate change, and valuation of ecosystem services however with the time dedicated to the other topics covered in this report, the committee did not to spend significant time on these topics this past year.

### **Member also received regular updates from staff as follows:**

- Division updates
- Agency financial and budget updates
- Forest Health issues
- Legislative updates
- Progress made in updating ODF Technical Notes
- Forest Legacy Program

## 2021-2022 Work Plan

The committee will continue to track policy topics before the BOF that are of interest to family forestland owners and continue working on the other items of interest noted above in this report. The CFF will evaluate its work plan in the fall when the committee reconvenes and adjust based on priority policy items.