

**Opening Statement from Rep. Kurt Schrader**  
**Hearing on “Air Quality Impacts of Wildfires: Perspectives of Key Stakeholders”**  
**House Committee on Energy & Commerce, Subcommittee on the Environment**  
**October 4, 2017**

Wildfire treatment and forest management must work hand in glove together. With 50% of the forest service budget consumed by firefighting, they cannot perform the active management that would help ameliorate the catastrophic effects of the fires we saw across the country this summer.

We need to treat wildfire like every other disaster in this country or things will get worse. Mr Simpson and I have legislation pending I would urge you to support. HR 2862.

The 2002 Biscuit fire in southern Oregon accounted for 25% of Oregon's total state emissions that year. Nothing else came close. And this year we have had some 48 fires in Oregon across the state, even in our wet forests on the west side.

The Eagle creek fire burned close to Portland and devastated our iconic Columbia River Gorge, denuding popular, and previously spectacular, hiking trails that now will not be available for years to come.

It is not an exaggeration to say that at one point this year a third of Oregon was on fire.

But there is a more dangerous and insidious problem in our federal forests that has gone almost completely unnoticed.

That is the carbon emissions from dead and diseased trees in our forests.

According to Oregon Global Warming Commission, Oregon's forests are responsible for 75% of all long term emissions produced statewide by all other sectors, dwarfing transportation, power plants, industrial, commercial, residential.

And the bulk of that is from tree mortality not just the wildfires. More telling yet, although federal forests occupy 50% of Oregon forests they account for 70% of yearly emissions due to tree mortality while private forests that occupy 33% of state forestland only emit 16% due to tree death.

Active forest management is essential to preventing harmful ozone depleting carbon emissions.

Active forest management is not synonymous with clear cutting. It is the stewardship of our forests that produces predominantly healthy trees that absorb that harmful carbon. In Oregon, our forests absorb an astounding 80 million metric tons of carbon emissions.

However, we can and should do better if we are serious about getting a handle on global warming. The beetle and disease infestations and resulting forest litter are an indictment of our failed stewardship of our national forests.

Active forest management would also put rural Americans and Oregonians back to work leading to economic prosperity in rural America not just the cities and suburbs. It is a win/win strategy.

Fortunately, there is legislation being developed to put health forest stewardship back into our neglected national forest treasures.

I look forward to the panel today to help show us the way.