

## **Responses by Oregon State Senator Herman E. Baertschiger, Jr.**

**To: The Honorable John Shimkus**

### **1. What is necessary to increase the pace and scale of prescribed burning and other active forest management activities? More specifically what needs to happen at the Federal level vs State and local levels?**

To increase the pace and scale of active forest management activities, uninterrupted investment by the Congress is necessary. Continuity and consistency with long-term support is crucial to the success of any effort related to active forest management. The solution to Western forest management is very long-term. It should be at least a 100 year plan to make an impact. Long term goals are difficult for most people to conceive, but is the reality in forest management. Forest management is dynamic {an ever changing environment} where one must adjust strategies, goals and tactics to meet the ever changing events. A consistent set of principles and directives that are adequately funded for the very long-term is needed to have successful active forest management.

Coordination between Federal, State and local agencies must include common and coordinated objectives and goals. This coordination is also required to increase the pace and scale of active forest management. Most states have a fire suppression model for state protected lands. The Federal government for at least the last 20 years has operated under a fire management model. This Suppression versus Management model is unsustainable. Managing fire during peak fire season is unacceptable because of the adverse effects to the health and welfare of the people. To have successful fire and forest management there should be coordinated strategies and goals, between the Federal and State

governments, especially during peak fire season. Their fire policies should be parallel and efforts should be consistent relating to same goals and outcomes by both State and Federal agencies.

**2. Can you provide your perspective on whether more coordination among federal and state authorities needed to make meaningful difference in reducing the risks of catastrophic wildfires?**

Managing fire during peak fire season is unacceptable because of the adverse effects to the health and welfare of the people. To have successful fire and forest management there should be coordinated strategies and goals, between the Federal and State governments, especially during peak fire season.

From a prevention and awareness perspective, identifying defensible space around communities and creating adequate escape routes that the public can be made aware of is a risk management tool that can be used to minimize the effects of catastrophic wildfires in rural communities. Fuel reduction around communities in fire prone areas can be employed to create and improve defensible space. Identification and enhanced public knowledge of escape routes in fire prone communities is an awareness tool. Much in the way that tsunami prone areas have signs and placards giving direction and creating awareness, a similar approach in fire prone areas could be used.

**3. Should air quality considerations play a greater role in informing decisions related to wildfire suppression and forestry management planning, and if so, how so?**

Air Quality considerations must play a greater role in decisions related to wildfire suppression and forestry management planning. Attempting to manage fire rather than suppress it during peak fire season is unacceptable because of air quality considerations. Managing fire during peak fire season is unacceptable because of the adverse effects to the health and welfare of the people. Forestry management planning, including harvest, thinning and controlled burning, can be managed correctly outside of peak fire season while still preserving air quality. Harvest and thinning do not create significant air quality impacts. Controlled burning can be managed outside of peak fire season and the impacts of smoke can be minimized. Air Quality impacts during some of the most recent fire seasons has often exceeded hazardous levels. Therefore, a full suppression policy should be followed during peak fire season and an aggressive control burning policy for the off season to minimize the impacts of smoke, and the health risks it presents to the public.