

POLICY POSITION



ENDING OREGON'S WILDFIRE CRISIS WHILE RESTORING ITS FOREST AND RANGE ECONOMY

Summary

Date

OCC supports the proper management of Oregon's federal lands through logging, grazing, and revised firefighting policy. | **October 2025**

OCC supports active management of Federal forests and rangelands in Oregon to reduce and fragment fuel loads, thereby abating fire hazards, together with commercial thinning harvest of 10 billion board feet per year from those forests and extensive grazing of rangelands.

KEY TENETS

BACKGROUND

After WWII and prior to 1987, the acreage burned in Oregon's wildfires was minimal with fires rarely exceeding 10,000 acres each. Since 1987, approximately 6.5 million acres have burned, including iconic up-to-600-year-old trees.

The Biscuit Fire (2002), at 500,000 acres, was the largest wildfire in Oregon's history. In the Labor Day Fires (2020), over a million acres burned, including the vaunted old-growth forests of Opal Creek. The Durkee Fire (2024) burned 300,000 acres. Thousands of homes have burned and dozens of people have been killed.

This trend of increased fire intensity, size, and frequency is driven by lawsuits that curtail fuel management on Federal forests and rangelands. Federal land managers (USFS and BLM) have been easy targets for "environmentalist" litigation. As a result, fuels (biomass) have accumulated to levels never seen before. The resulting catastrophic megafires destroy old-growth forests, wildlife, soil, water quality, aquatics, air quality, scenery, and recreation.

Rather than protect the Northern Spotted Owl, eliminating forest management and burning millions of acres of owl forests has led to a 95% population decline. The owls, which are not made of asbestos, are nearly extirpated. Neither are sage grouse fire proof. Federal "protection" of sage grouse through cattle removal has led to rangeland fuel build-up and megafires that destroy all the resident wildlife, including sage grouse.

Since 1987, timber harvest from Federal forests in Oregon has declined by 10 billion board feet per year. Oregon's economy has lost over \$500 billion, contributing to poverty, decline in schools, failing businesses, broken families, drug and alcohol abuse, and hunger. Oregon has the 8th largest homeless population in absolute numbers and the highest rate per capita of any state.

REDUCE AND FRAGMENT FUELS

OCC supports intensive reduction of wildfire fuels across all Federal lands in Oregon, including forest thinning, reducing stocking to the largest 20-40 trees per acre, piling and burning slash and ground fuels, mastication, increased grazing of rangelands, increased road access and fuel breaks, defensible fuel profile zones, and controlled ground fires where safe.

FIGHT FIRES

Passive "Let It Burn" policies allow fires to rage out of control. The million-acre Labor Day fires of 2020 are a prime example. OCC supports Contain, Control, and Extinguish policy in accord with Federal/State MOUs. OCC calls for a ban on aerial ignition used by Federal fire teams to ignite and burn green old-growth owl nesting forests in Oregon.

RESTORE OUR NATURAL RESOURCE ECONOMY

OCC supports a forest restoration thinning harvest of at least 10 billion board feet of sawlog timber per year from Federal forests, representing annual growth only. OCC supports increasing grazing allotments on Federal lands to abate rangeland fire hazards. Grazing of rangelands is the best way to reduce grassy fuels and restore soil health.

END ENVIRONMENTAL LAWFARE

OCC condemns the stream of litigation brought forth by left-leaning government agencies and environmental groups, creating catastrophic megafire conditions. Aggressive eco-litigation, locking up the most productive forests, have severely harmed the land and people of Oregon.

In summary: To reverse the catastrophic megafire trend in Oregon and improve our economy, OCC advocates for intensive fuel reduction, active fire suppression, expanded timber harvesting and grazing, and an end to environmental lawsuits that block effective forest and rangeland management.