



MEMORANDUM

TO: Board of Commissioners

FROM: John R. Arnold, Management Analyst II

JA

SUBJECT: State Department of Forestry Request For Funds Under Title III.

DATE: March 19, 2003

On February 26, 2003 staff attended a meeting with officials from the Oregon Department of Forestry. Among the items discussed was a proposal by the Forestry Department that Lane County provide money under Title III to pay for wildland firefighting crews from June 15, 2003 to June 30, 2003.

Staff is aware that the Board will hear this proposal and requests direction. If the Board of Commissioners wish to fund this request, certain procedural steps would need to occur. If directed, staff is prepared to complete the following tasks. These tasks are supplemented with associated policy and procedural questions the Board may wish to consider.

1. Comprehensive analysis of proposal and eligibility under Title III
 - a. Is the project eligible for Title III funds?
 - b. If eligible, is it fully or partially fundable?
2. Development of a reimbursement model
 - a. How will payment be made?
 - b. Title III is a reimbursement model. Will that work given the narrow project scope, timeline and budget constraints of the Forestry Department?
 - c. Can a model be developed that would pass a federal audit?
3. Completion of a 45-day public comment period process
 - a. March 28th to May 12th
4. Development of an agreement with the Department of State Forestry
5. Completion of a Board Order authorizing the use of funds under Title III
 - a. Earliest date to consider is May 14th after close of public comment period
6. Completion of all administrative, financial review, and reporting requirements



Oregon

Theodore R. Kulungoski, Governor

Department of Forestry

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March 6, 2003

Chair of the Lane County Commissioners
Lane County
125 E. 8th
Eugene, OR, 97401

Dear Commissioner Sorenson;

My name is Rick Rogers and I am the District Forester for Western Lane District of the Oregon Department of Forestry. The Department protects both private forestland and land managed by the Bureau of Land Management from wildland fire. During the current state budget crisis, we had to cut our seasonal fire fighting force for first two weeks of the season. I would like to meet with the Commissioners to discuss the possibility of funding the seasonal force with Title 3 dollars in order to provide an adequate level of protection for the forest landowners of Lane County.

If possible I would like to meet with you at the March 18th Commissioners meeting and explain my proposal. I thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Rick Rogers
District Forester, Western Lane District

Proposal for Expenditure of Title 3 Money for Fire Suppression and Prevention

Current Situation:

The Department of Forestry provides Wildland Fire Protection for 1,338,410 acres of forestland in Lane County. The majority of this acreage is private forestland owners. Included in this is 388,493 acres of the Bureau of Land Management ownership for which the Department provides protection through a contractual relationship.

Most government agencies expend money on an even flow expenditure pattern. The nature of the Department of Forestry's business causes most of its funds to be expended during the high fire danger period in the summers. When the Oregon General Fund experienced short falls this past year, the legislature required reductions from the agencies in order to balance the 01-03 budget. Coming off of two bad fire seasons and already short of funds, the department made every budget-tightening move it could, but still found itself needing to make additional cuts to obtain reductions targets determined by the legislature in the re-balancing of the budget. One of the last moves the department made was to reduce all seasonal hiring for the 2003 fire season by two weeks.

The Western Lane District and Eastern Lane District normally hires about 20 seasonal employees each. We hire many college students as they become available at the end of spring term. This usually occurs about the 15th of June. They spend much of the remainder of the month of June in training learning how to fight fire safely and effectively. With this delay, we will hire our seasonal fire crews the first of July and will not have them fully trained until the middle of the month.

The delay in hiring may cause us to lose some of our best candidates that will look for other work where they can start immediately after school. It also will greatly reduce the level of protection to Lane County forest owners between the middle of June until we complete training in July.

Proposal:

The Department of Forestry would propose that Lane County provide Title 3 dollars to back fill for the lost general fund that provides wildland fire protection for Lane County. The costs of the seasonal fire crews are approximately \$28,000 per week for the Department's 40 seasonal employees in the two Lane County districts. To backfill for the two weeks would cost \$56,000. The benefit of this move is to provide an adequate level of fire protection to the Lane County forestland owners and the employment of 40 Lane County residents. One of the accepted uses of the Title 3 money is fire protection. We request that Lane County make all or a portion of the \$56,000 available to the Department of Forestry to provide this adequate level of protection.

Current Situation:

The Department of Forestry has funded the training and a portion of the equipping of the Alma Forest Work Camp for fire fighting. The Department of Forestry runs monthly training sessions during the summer months to keep Alma inmate crews available for fire fighting. This includes all training materials plus personnel to instruct the classes. The Department has also provided a portion of the clothing and equipment needed for the crews to fight fire. This includes; fire shirts, pants, fire shelters, headlamps, web gear, and hand tools. The Department may not have the funds to provide these services this summer depending on the budget.

Status:

Lane County staff has indicated that the equipment needs of the Forest Work Camp are being addressed internally.