

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WATER AND LAND USE

February 19, 2003
3:00 p.m.

Hearing Room D
Tapes 16 - 17

MEMBERS PRESENT: Sen. Ted Ferrioli, Chair
Sen. Charlie Ringo, Vice-Chair
Sen. Rick Metsger
Sen. Jason Atkinson

GUESTS PRESENT: Sen. Frank Shields

STAFF PRESENT: Judith Callens, Committee Administrator
Megan Jensen, Committee Assistant

MEASURE/ISSUES HEARD: Informational Meeting
2002 Fire Season Report and 2003 Outlook

These minutes are in compliance with Senate and House Rules. Only text enclosed in quotation marks reports a speaker's exact words. For complete contents, please refer to the tapes.

<u>TAPE/#</u>	<u>Speaker</u>	<u>Comments</u>
TAPE 16, A		
005	Chair Ferrioli	Calls committee meeting to order at 3:12 p.m. and opens informational meeting.
<u>INFORMATIONAL MEETING</u>		
<u>2002 Fire Season Report and 2003 Outlook</u>		
010	Charlie Stone	Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF). Presents an overview of the 2002 fire season (EXHIBIT A). Discusses the national and local fire season experience.
060	Chair Ferrioli	Comments on predicting the location and severity of fires.
065	Stone	Confirms that lightening patterns in the summer help predict where catastrophic fires might start.
100	Chair Ferrioli	Comments on Oregon's participation in cooperative fire fighting agreements with other entities.
108	Stone	Confirms that Oregon provides about 6000 contract firefighters.
110	Chair Ferrioli	Notes that early in the fire season, 5000 contract firefighters were committed elsewhere.
112	Stone	Affirms.
114	Chair Ferrioli	Reiterates that many of Oregon's firefighters were elsewhere when the Biscuit fire started.
120	Stone	Concurs.
123	Chair Ferrioli	Comments that cooperative fire fighting agreements are costly to Oregon.
127	Stone	Continues overview of fire season.
142	Sen. Metsger	Asks how many acres of forestlands burned in Oregon were federal lands.
145	Stone	Responds. Continues discussion of issues surrounding the 2002 fire season in Oregon: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Weather conditions• Lightening strikes• Fire suppression

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resources
240	Chair Ferrioli	Asks for clarification on how resources were affected by changes in federal fire management policies.
245	Stone	Explains that there were people available, but because supervisors didn't exist in the ratios dictated by policy, they couldn't always be put to work. Policy allows for flexibility but that flexibility wasn't utilized because of personal liability concerns.
275	Chair Ferrioli	Comments on the national shortage of fireline supervisors.
322	Stone	Talks about the coordination of federal and state agencies to set interagency priorities. Discusses the roles of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Conflagration Act.
380	Sen. Atkinson	Asks about coordination between agencies regarding the Biscuit Fire.
386	Stone	The Multi-Agency Coordination System (MACS) is a coordinating group that does not participate in actual fire suppression but allocates resources from around the country and sets priorities.
400	Sen. Atkinson	Inquires if MACS makes decisions for northern California.
405	Stone	Replies that each federal or geographic region has its own MACS operation.
408	Sen. Atkinson	Asks who decides where tankers go on an initial fire attack.
410	Stone	Responds that the national MACS in Boise determines priorities nationally and the regional MACS determines local priorities.
TAPE 17, A		
002	Sen. Atkinson	Comments that MACS did not work well when addressing the 2002 Biscuit Fire.
015	Roy Woo	ODF Acting Director. Responds and discusses issues surrounding the Biscuit Fire.
047	Stone	Talks about ODF's fire season experience.
087	Chair Ferrioli	Comments on the aggressiveness of building firelines.
090	Stone	Explains a direct attack approach.
097	Chair Ferrioli	Clarifies direct versus indirect attack approaches.
107	Stone	Talks about indirect attack strategies. Discusses the costs and status of fire suppression funds from ODF's 2002 fire season.
140	Sen. Metsger	Inquires whether ODF purchased insurance for the 2003 fire season.
145	Stone	Replies that ODF is in the process of purchasing insurance coverage.
154	Sen. Metsger	Asks what effect the current budget will have on the price of next season's insurance purchase.
158	Stone	States that insurance costs will be higher than in the past.
171	Chair Ferrioli	Comments on insurance policies.
193	Sen. Ringo	Asks if Oregon uses its insurance benefits.
197	Stone	Responds that until last year premiums paid in and claims paid out were equal.
211	Sen. Ringo	Comments on the risks of buying fire prevention insurance.
218	Chair Ferrioli	Asserts that ODF should continue to buy insurance.
230	Woo	Comments on how ODF insurance policies differ from other states.
247	Stone	Talks about firefighting problems observed.
260	Chair Ferrioli	Comments about the ideal conditions for fighting a fire.

275	Stone	Elaborates on staffing policies.
280	Chair Ferrioli	Asks if a fire under 5000 acres qualifies for cooperative funding for cost sharing.
288	Stone	Replies that there is no 5000 acre limit. Continues discussion of fire suppression problems.
295	Chair Ferrioli	Inquires whether a crew is sent home after working eight hours.
299	Stone	Clarifies work policies. States that resources are pulled off attacks due to work hours limits and team transitions are too frequent and disruptive.
357	Chair Ferrioli	Comments on problems with frequent team transitions.
362	Stone	Explains team transition policies. Continues discussing problems surrounding fire fighting policies.
TAPE 16, B		
012	Chair Ferrioli	Asks about restrictions on the use of helicopters and bulldozers.
014	Stone	Elaborates on restrictions on equipment use.
016	Sen. Atkinson	Asks if state agencies address the use of bulldozers differently from federal agencies.
023	Woo	Replies that federal agencies seem more reluctant to use bulldozers.
032	Stone	Continues discussing problems with fire fighting policies and courses of action.
075	Stone	Concludes ODF overview of 2002 fire season and discusses the root problems surrounding fire prevention: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fuel conditions • Unclear mission and priorities • Issues of personal liability
090	Chair Ferrioli	Comments on personal liability issues.
121	Stone	States that ODF acknowledges the importance of addressing liability issues.
140	Chair Ferrioli	Advises that the Bureau of Land Management was invited to the hearing to encourage a collaborative partnership between federal and state agencies for fire control.
152	Stone	States that the fire management system is designed to support large fire management.
165	Chair Ferrioli	Believes that command and control structures should remain in place regionally.
175	Stone	Replies that more people need to be trained to support fire prevention.
185	Sen. Shields	Asks if retired Forest Service fire fighters can return to fight fires if they are needed.
195	Stone	Affirms. Discusses a fundamental shift in the workforce from people with regular day jobs to people whose job is firefighting.
246	Woo	Talks about the inability to actively manage national forest lands. Discusses recent developments in fire management and policy changes.
365	Sen. Atkinson	Comments on the 2002 fire season and the need for state and federal agencies work on fire fighting priorities.
TAPE 17, B		
031	Sen. Atkinson	Continues comments on fire fighting policies and the need for coordination between agencies and the public.
051	Woo	Addresses the issue of sustainability of state and federal lands.
062	Chris Sokol	US Timberlands L.L.C. Provides testimony on managing industrial forestland in southern Oregon during the 2002 fire

season (**EXHIBIT B**).

080	Chair Ferrioli	Comments on cooperative agreements with federal agencies.
102	Sokol	Discusses issues surrounding fire suppression policies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work and rest guidelines • Fire fighting efficiency • Overhead shortage
190	Sokol	Talks about the gap between federal and ODF firefighting strategies and conflicts in land management values.
240	Lee Miller	Miller Timber Services. Comments on his experiences as a fire fighter and talks about fire prevention policies.
290	Sen. Shields	Asks where Miller Timber Services is located.
294	Miller	Responds his company is based in the Willamette Valley.
300	Sen. Metsger	Asks about the lifespan of white fir in terms of marketable value.
312	Sokol	Replies that white fir will go within two years.
325	Chair Ferrioli	Asks if anyone threatened him while fighting fires on his own private land.
337	Sokol	Responds that he was not personally threatened.
344	Sen. Atkinson	States that a joint memorial on fire management will come to the Senate floor.
393	Sen. Metsger	Comments on federal and state management of forestland protection.
420	Chair Ferrioli	Talks about finding ways to continue a productive partnership with federal agencies. Closes informational meeting and adjourns meeting at 5:00 p.m.

EXHIBIT SUMMARY

A – Informational Meeting, ODF, written testimony, Charlie Stone, 15 pp

B – Informational Meeting, Forestry, written testimony, Chris Sokol, 3 pp