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FUSEE: Firefighters United for Safety, Ethics, and Ecology

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Firefighters' Group Offers Constructive Criticism of Policy Recommendations by the Governor's Wildfire Response Council

Policies Seek to Usurp Federal Fire Management Policy and Authority by Imposing the State's 'Zero Fire Tolerance' Philosophy on All Lands in Oregon

SALEM, OR - Firefighters United for Safety, Ethics, and Ecology released on Monday, September 16, 2019 an analysis of policy recommendations by the Governor's Wildfire Response Council (WRC) at the Headquarters of Oregon's Department of Forestry in the Salem. The WRC was charged with developing policy recommendations to address Oregon's current model for wildfire prevention, preparedness, and response, and determining whether or not the current model will be sustainable in the future. The WRC concluded that the current system is not sustainable, and proposed a multi-billion dollar, multi-decade program of making large taxpayer investments to fund a "surge" in firefighting capacity.

"The WRC distorts the '*all lands, all hands, all options*' approach of the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy by advocating essentially one option only--aggressive initial attack firefighting and full suppression--as the only acceptable response to wildfires," said Timothy Ingalsbee, executive director of FUSEE. "This represents an audacious attempt to usurp federal fire policy and authority to manage wildfires with ecological fire use in remote wildlands and wilderness areas by imposing the State's 'zero fire tolerance' philosophy on all public lands in Oregon."

The WRC failed to incorporate findings from decades of advances in fire ecology research that reveal the vital role and essential function of recurring fires in forests and grasslands. The WRC also refused to acknowledge progressive federal fire policy that seeks to expand the use of prescribed and wildland fire to restore and maintain fire-adapted ecosystems.

"In the face of the past century's Quixotic war on wildfire that failed to extirpate it from the landscape, the WRC policy recommendations represent a vain attempt to further bolster a fire exclusion paradigm that is rapidly becoming obsolete," said Timothy Ingalsbee, "The WRC's apparent desire to import the CalFire model of "heavy metal" firefighting with near-limitless State funding is not ecologically viable or economically sustainable in Oregon, and should be rejected as a dead end strategy."

FUSEE Board member, Rich Fairbanks, testified later on Monday, September 16th before a special committee hearing in the State Capitol building that was convened by Oregon State Senator, Jeff Golden, who is seeking to gain more input from fire ecology and management experts in response to the shortcomings of the WRC document.

A copy of FUSEE's critique of the WRC policy recommendations can be found at:

<https://www.fusee.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/FUSEE-analysis-of-WRC-proposals-9-16-19.pdf>

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