

2023

Environmental Justice
Council: Annual Report



**Oregon
Department
of Forestry**

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AGENCY INTRODUCTION

Department of Forestry Mission Statement

To serve the people of Oregon by protecting, managing, and promoting stewardship of Oregon's forests to enhance environmental, economic, and community sustainability.

Department of Forestry Leadership

Cal Mukumoto- Oregon State Forester (see [Appendix A](#) for Organizational Chart)

For more than a century, the Board of Forestry and Department of Forestry have been caring for Oregon's forests. The board was established in 1911, along with the positions of state forester and deputy state forester. Together, they were charged with preventing forest fires and coordinating the response when fires did start. This was the start of Oregon's complete and coordinated fire protection system that is still a crucial part of our suppression success today.

The Oregon Board of Forestry is a [seven-member citizen board](#) appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the state Senate. The board is charged with representing the public interest and its primary responsibilities are to:

- Supervise all matters of forest policy within Oregon.
- Appoint the State Forester, who also serves as the director of ODF.
- Adopt rules regulating forest practices.
- Provide general supervision of the State Forester's duties in managing ODF.

The Department of Forestry's work is truly a team effort. The policy and direction established at the headquarters level guides the work happening in the field statewide. The department's headquarters are in Salem, but much of the on-the-groundwork is done by the leadership and staff of ODF's 12 districts with 24 units from Astoria to Wallowa and all the way down to Lakeview and Medford. The dedicated public servants in these offices are the people responsible for fighting fires, assisting landowners and managing our state forestlands every day for their fellow Oregonians.

Environmental Justice Key Personnel

- Megan Donecker- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Strategy Officer and EJC agency representative for ODF
- Christie Shaw – National Fire Plan Coordinator
- Scott Althenhoff- Urban and Community Forestry

- Brittany Oxford- Urban and Community Forestry
- Evan Elderbrock- Urban and Community Forestry, member of the EJC mapping tool workgroup
- Lilah Gonen- Urban and Community Forestry

Agency Budget and Revenue Sources

The agency has an all funds budget for the 2023-25 biennium of \$576.8 million. This includes an appropriation of \$157.7 million of General Fund, \$359.8 million in Other Funds, \$45.2 million in Federal Funds authorization, and \$2.5 million of Lottery Funds.

Agency Programs Relevant to EJ Reporting

- Forest Resources Division
 - Urban and Community Forestry
 - Schroeder Seed Orchard
 - Landscape restoration and resiliency
- State Forests Division
 - Forest management for the “greatest permanent value” to all Oregonians
 - Recreation, Education and Interpretation
- Protection Division
 - Protection from Fire
 - Smoke Management
 - Wildfire prevention and mitigation

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE HIGHLIGHTS

Urban and Community Forestry Program

The Urban and Community Forestry (UCF) Program centers environmental justice through the improved access to the benefits of urban forests and resources to support planning, planting, maintenance, and workforce diversification.

The UCF Program applied for and received two Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) grants, totaling \$26.6 million in funding from the United States Forest Service (USFS), to stand up two grant programs:

- \$10 million devoted specifically to federally recognized Tribes and Tribal organizations and
- \$12.5 million to promote urban and community forest investment and tree equity for overburdened and underserved communities.

The UCF Program has presented to the Natural Resource Working Group and Economic Development Cluster to share information about the IRA funding opportunities available to the nine federally recognized Tribes of Oregon. In addition, the UCF Program has been coordinating with ODF's Deputy Tribal Liaison and Cultural Resource Steward and is actively engaging with representatives from each of the nine federally recognized Tribes of Oregon to build relationships and discuss this funding opportunity.

Additional EJ activities the UCF Program is engaged with:

- Non-profits and CBOs to understand the current state of urban forest work with a view towards providing resources and assistance in their program efforts.
- A \$190,000 State Urban Forest Resiliency grant to support proactive tree care in low income and disadvantaged communities.
- The Department of Land Conservation and Development to establish a \$6.5 million state-funded grant program focused on planning and implementing green infrastructure projects in low-income communities who bare a disproportionate health burden and lack equitable access to environmental benefits, such as trees or parks.
- Support of the state-mandated environmental justice mapping tool by providing technical expertise to the Environmental Justice Council's Mapping Methodology Working Group.

- Funding student stipends and helping organize/lead the Climate Justice Leadership Program, which supports 15 Latino/a high school students in the development of an Emerald Ash Borer response plan for Centro Cultural, a non-profit organization that serves the Latino community in Washington County.

Schroeder Seed Orchard

The seed orchard staff engaged in the following EJ activities in 2023:

- Attended the history and Culture Summit of the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde.
- Provided tours of the seed orchard to the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians and the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde and discussed Tribes' interest in an ongoing and consistent supply of western red cedar, as well as options for purchasing seed for areas of ownership.

Other EJ highlights

- Presented at Jesuit High School during their Environmental Justice Week. Topics included: Redlining and the effect it had on the Portland Area, forestry careers for students, the effects of recent wildfires on communities.
- Hosted the inaugural 20-year Landscape Resiliency Strategy Summit. A core component of the strategy is engagement with the nine federally recognized Tribes in Oregon.
- Sponsored and participated in Lomakatsi Restoration's *Inter-Tribal Ecosystem Restoration Peer-to-Peer Learning Summit*, which brought together Tribal, nonprofit and agency leaders to increasing tribal inclusion in landscape-scale restoration initiatives through peer-to-peer learning.
- Started discussions around opportunities to provide excess seedlings grown to replant state forestlands to help Tribes in their reforestation efforts. So far, the Coquille Indian Tribe has requested 5,000 seedlings to reforest Tribal lands, specifically in areas affected by the Anvil Fire.

AGENCY ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE CONSIDERATIONS

Climate Change and Oregon's Forests

The Oregon Department of Forestry has been committed for over 100 years to preserve and sustainably manage forested ecosystems. The agency considers climate change a major threat to those goals. We have been actively collaborating with agency partners to develop effective policies to help mitigate and adapt to the predicted changes.

Climate change threatens the health and viability of both Oregon's human and ecological communities. The human communities facing the greatest threats are often those that are already vulnerable due to long-standing socioeconomic disparities.

ODF's [Climate Change and Carbon Plan](#) works to position Oregon as a regional leader in climate-smart forestry, including both climate-change mitigation and adaptation. The goals are to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions, increase carbon sequestration (i.e. storage of carbon in trees), and positively benefit climate-impacted and resource-dependent communities.

Additionally, the work of our Urban and Community Forestry Program is critical.

The Oregon Board of Forestry and ODF provide national leadership in climate-smart and socially equitable forest policies that promote climate health, resilient forests, community wellbeing, and a viable forest products industry.

-Climate Change Vision

ADDRESS ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE ISSUES (ORS 182.550 SECTION 1)

Environmental Justice Consideration Process

While some specific programs, like Urban and Community Forestry, do take environmental justice factors into account because of the very clear connection between EJ and their work, there isn't currently an agencywide process to ensure consideration as part of all policy and operational decisions. However, ODF is committed to establishing a policy and process to achieve that objective. The department looks forward to the opportunity to learn and better understand environmental justice factors overall, how those intersect with our work, and how we can most effectively incorporate consideration of those factors into our planning and decision-making processes.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND MEANINGFUL INVOLVEMENT (ORS 182.535 SECTION 2)

ORS 182.550 Section 2: Increase public participation of individuals and communities affected by agencies' decisions

Public Engagement Policy and Processes

Public Engagement Policy

ODF does not have a current public engagement policy. We have been tracking the need for one for the past few years but haven't had the capacity to fully engage in this work across the agency until more recently. The lessons learned during broader engagement efforts related to strategic planning will be incorporated into this policy, which we will focus on developing during late 2024 and early 2025, in conjunction with the operationalization of the board and department strategic plan (framework adoption scheduled for June 2024).

Criteria for Public Participation

- The most common occurrence to trigger public participation is rulemaking processes and review of our district-level fire protection budgets, both of which require public hearings. Under Oregon Administrative Rule, we also solicit and consider public comments as part of our state forest management and operational planning processes.
- The Board of Forestry has long incorporated public comment opportunities into its meetings, both on decision items and any other forestry-related topics.
- The State Forests Advisory Committee has broad representation that provides input on implementation issues specifically. This includes a diverse representation of recreation, environmental and forest industry, as well as a Tribal representative, county commissioner, 2 non-affiliated representatives and an OSU extension service representative.

Level and Quality of Public Participation

The level and quality of public participation depends heavily upon the topic. Some topics are seen as controversial or polarizing and generate a high level of public input—verbally and in writing—to department leadership and staff, as well as the Board of Forestry. The quality of the content varies greatly. The two factors that contribute the most to content quality are the degree of understanding of the

topic and whether the input process is being guided or driven by special or political interests.

Follow-up

Currently each operational division within the agency has its own process for responding to public input received. As part of the public engagement policy we will be developing in the near future, we will set a base expectation for follow ups to promote consistency and equality in response and allow Oregonians to set reasonable expectations for follow-up engagement with the department.

Targeted Audiences

Historically, the department has heavily engaged with two key groups of stakeholders: forest products interests (including large and small forestland owners, loggers, mills and others involved with forest products) and environmental/conservation interests. Specific to state forestlands, we also regularly engage with commissioners of the trust land counties that financially benefit from state forests timber harvest and outdoor recreation groups.

The board and department worked with Oregon's Kitchen Table on the broader engagement effort, and OKT created a number of ways for Oregonians to provide input in multiple languages over the course of several months. They started this process with conversations with approximately 40 organizations to learn more about how and where forests were being talked about in Oregon. This ultimately led to more than 4,000 Oregonians sharing their thoughts about Oregon's forests, which is more than usual in both number and diversity.

Participation highlights:

- Survey offered in 9 languages, with 3,870 responses
- 9 self-organized community conversations
- 2 food bank partnerships
- 68 community member interviews at various events

AGENCY ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE IMPACTS (ORS 182.550 SECTION 3)

ORS 182.550 Section 3: Determine the effect of agencies' decisions on environmental justice communities.

State forests management plans have associated performance measures designed to measure the success of plan goals and strategies in delivering economic, social and environmental benefits to the people of Oregon. The Western Oregon State Forests Management Plan is currently being drafted, along with new performance measures.

AGENCY ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE PROGRESS (ORS 182.550 SECTION 4)

ORS 182.550 Section 4: Improve plans to further improve environmental justice in Oregon

How is EJ built into agency strategic plans?

As part of the Board of Forestry and Department of Forestry's strategic planning work, we have been making a dedicated effort to engage more broadly with Oregonians, as forests impact the lives of everyone in our state in a variety of ways. The framework of this strategic plan will be adopted in June 2024, which will include the establishment of continued broader engagement efforts as a priority body of work. Additionally, there is ongoing conversation on where and how to prioritize strategies related to environmental justice throughout the various goals of the strategic plan to advance the department's efforts to fulfill our statutory duties under ORS 182.545.

What does your agency need to further develop and implement environmental justice policies at the agency?

ODF would benefit from additional education, understanding, and statewide standards related to environmental justice topics.

AGENCY ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE MAPPING TOOL INVOLVEMENT (ORS 182.550 SECTION 5)

ORS 182.550 Section 5: *Utilize the environmental justice mapping tool developed under section 12 of this 2022 Act.*

How is your agency participating in the development of the environmental justice mapping tool?

The Oregon Department of Forestry has a staff member, Evan Elderbrock, sitting on the EJ mapping tool workgroup. Through this group he has:

- Met regularly with representatives from academic institutions (i.e., OSU and PSU) and state agencies to discuss methodological approaches to mapping Environmental Justice Communities in Oregon.
- Evaluated existing EJ mapping tools to identify pros and cons for different methodological approaches.
- Provided input on important considerations for Oregon EJ mapping tool based on my experience as a researcher.

AGENCY ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE COUNCIL ENGAGEMENT 2024

The Department of Forestry will actively seek out advice and guidance from the Environmental Justice Council on key environmental justice topics in Oregon. ODF will use that guidance to:

- Inform its development of a policy and process for incorporating EJ considerations into planning and decision making, and
- Identify actions the department can incorporate into its operational planning to help address the EJ issues that are within our scope and authority.

AGENCY ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE COUNCIL LEGISLATION CITATIONS

HB 3630 (2023): Directs the State Department of Energy to establish program to provide assistance related to energy projects and activities to environmental justice communities. As many of the energy projects involve state lands or at minimum involve energy transmission lines through forests, the department has been working closely with the Department of Energy through the creation of the legislation through to the implementation of energy projects on the landscape.

AGENCY MEANINGFUL ENGAGEMENT RELATED LEGISLATION

HB 3173 (2023): Established a Task Force on Tribal Consultation and specified task force membership. The Oregon Department of Forestry regularly engages with the nine Federally recognized Tribes of Oregon. From wildfire protection to culturally important sites on state forestlands, ODF works closely with Tribes to maintain Tribal sovereignty while balancing the cultural and physical needs of land managers. HB 3173 creates a Tribal Engagement Task Force that, at minimum, ODF will be actively involved in working to identify and clarify the requirements of state agencies to engage in Tribal consultation. ODF may also be present as a representative State agency on the Task Force. ODF will be working closely with the Tribes and other agencies to refine and standardize the engagement process that all agencies will undertake.

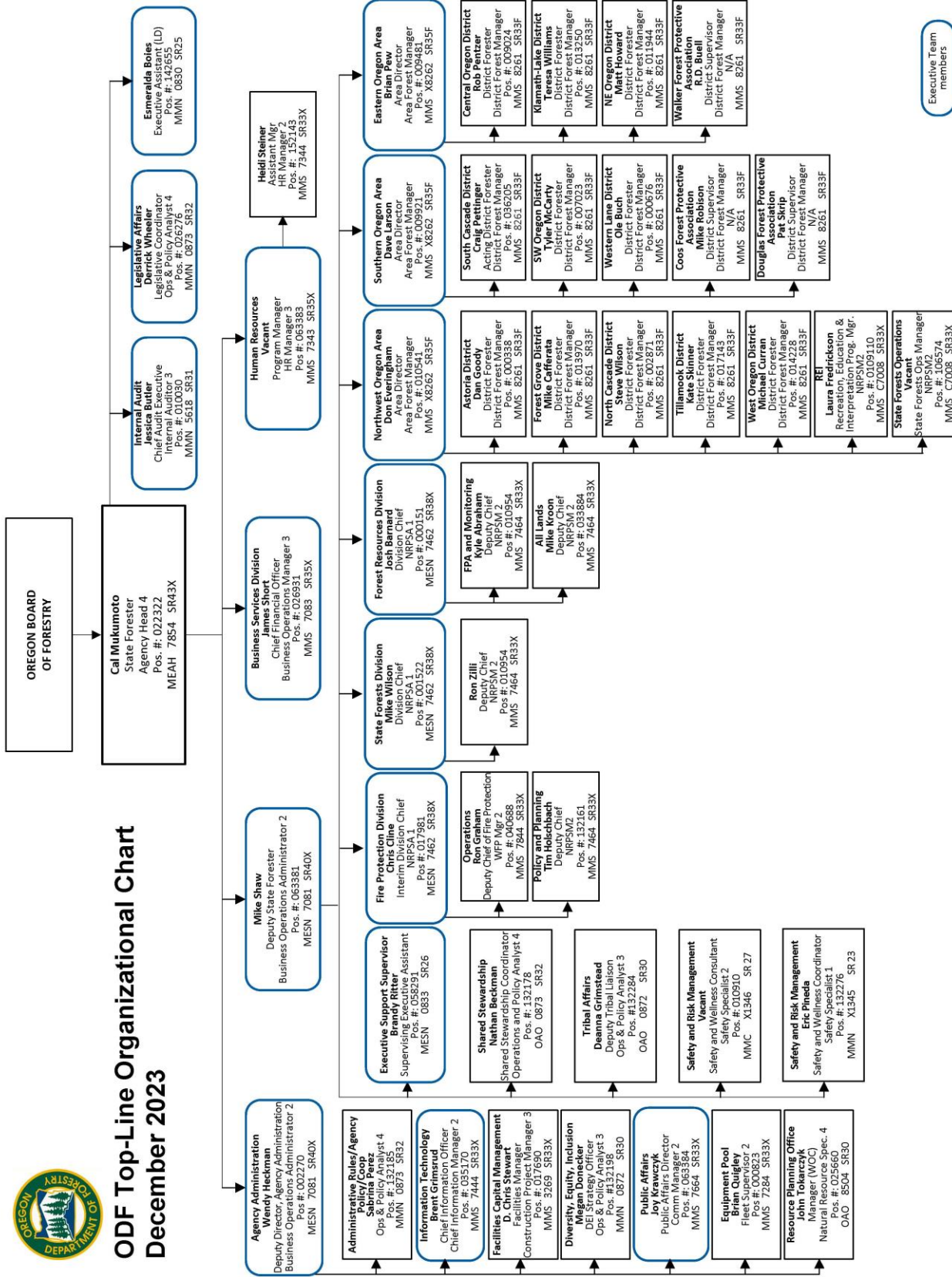
HB 3293 (2021): Authorized the provider of water project support to make support available to local organizations and local governments for the purpose of developing local community engagement plans for water projects. In shaping these water projects, the bill required that community engagement plans supported by provider utilize goals and approaches for increased participation of disproportionately impacted communities in decisions related to identification, scoping, design, and implementation of water projects. The department has been working with the Department of Environmental Quality, Oregon Business Development Department, Department of Fish and Wildlife, Oregon Health Authority, Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, and the Water Resources Department to produce sustainable watershed projects, particularly in the North Coast region and on state forestlands.

LOOKING AHEAD

Over the last few years, the department has undertaken big changes to our core business functions and we have been adjusting operationally and administratively to adapt to the seismic shifts in forest practices, wildfire challenges, forest health and climate change impacts. More and more, we're finding ourselves at the center of multi-year recovery efforts and increasingly involved in the communities we protect in ways we haven't before. As we manage this change and as communities continue to look to us for leadership, we have an opportunity to recommit ourselves to our diversity, equity, and inclusion values. This includes gaining a better understanding of our role in promoting and supporting environmental justice efforts and then stepping fully into that role.

APPENDIX A

Department of Forestry Organizational Chart as of December 2023.



APPENDIX B

Definitions

Environmental Justice (ORS 182.535 Section 3)

“Environmental justice” means the equal protection from environmental and health risks, fair treatment and meaningful involvement in decision making of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, immigration status, income or other identities with respect to the development, implementation and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies that affect the environment in which people live, work, learn and practice spirituality and culture.

Environmental Justice Community (ORS 182.535 Section 4)

“Environmental justice community” includes communities of color, communities experiencing lower incomes, communities experiencing health inequities, tribal communities, rural communities, remote communities, coastal communities, communities with limited infrastructure and other communities traditionally underrepresented in public processes and adversely harmed by environmental and health hazards, including seniors, youth and persons with disabilities.

Meaningful Involvement (ORS 182.535 Section 7)

“Meaningful involvement” means:

- (a) Members of vulnerable populations have appropriate opportunities to participate in decisions about a proposed activity that will affect their environment or health;
- (b) Public involvement can influence a decision maker’s decision;
- (c) The concerns of all participants involved are considered in the decision-making process; and
- (d) Decision makers seek out and facilitate the involvement of members of vulnerable populations

Environmental Burdens (ORS 182.535 Section 2)

“Environmental burden” means the environmental and health risks to communities caused by the combined historic, current and projected future effects of:

- (a) Exposure to conventional pollution and toxic hazards in the air or in or on water or land;
- (b) Adverse environmental conditions caused or made worse by other contamination or pollution; and

- (c) Changes in the environment resulting from climate change, such as water insecurity, drought, flooding, wildfire, smoke and other air pollution, extreme heat, loss of traditional cultural resources or foods, ocean acidification, sea-level rise and increases in infectious disease.

APPENDIX C

House Bill 4077 (2022)

Legislation establishing the Environmental Justice Council, the Council's responsibility to develop an environmental justice mapping tool, develop a biannual report to the Governor, and the requirement for natural resource agencies to submit an annual report to the Environmental Justice Council.

Senate Bill 420 (2007)

Legislation establishing the Environmental Justice Task Force, the predecessor for the Environmental Justice Council. It also includes requirements for the Task Force to submit biannual reports to the Governor and the requirement for natural resource agencies to submit an annual report to the Environmental Justice Task Force.

ORS 182.550 Reports by natural resource agencies

All directors of natural resource agencies, and other agency directors as the Governor may designate, shall report annually to the Environmental Justice Task Force and to the Governor on the results of the agencies' efforts to:

1. Address environmental justice issues;
2. Increase public participation of individuals and communities affected by agencies' decisions;
3. Determine the effect of the agencies' decisions on environmental justice communities;
4. Improve plans to further the progress of environmental justice in Oregon; and
5. Utilize the environmental justice mapping tool developed under section 12 of this 2022 Act.