

Burley's forest legacy signed into law

by Bend_Weekly_News_Sources

SALEM, Ore. - State Representative Chuck Burley (R-Bend) attended the Governor's signing ceremony on Wednesday morning to usher into law Oregon's extended Forest Legacy Program. The federal program was established in 1990 and works in partnership with states to conserve forestlands from being converted to non-forest uses.

Each state determines the extent to which they participate in the program. Prior to House Bill 2468, Oregon required proposed forest legacy land areas be wholly within an urban growth boundary. The new law eliminates the UGB requirement and promotes good stewardship and long-term sustainable management of privately held forested areas.

"This program is one more tool in the toolbox for conserving forestland from alternative development uses," Burley said. "The Forest Legacy Program is entirely voluntary and is a federal-state partnership that leverages funds to help maintain critical forestland for economic, environmental and social roles."

Between 1992 and 1997, nearly 1 million acres of private forestland were lost to development each year. Projections suggest that another 26 million acres will be lost to development by 2030. However, under the Forest Legacy Program, forestland protection and other conservation opportunities arise.

"Oregon can now, in partnership, identify and protect millions of acres of private timberlands for forest management activities, wildlife habitat and restoration, and outdoor recreation," Burley said. "This legislation is consistent with Oregon's heritage and with Oregon's goals for the future."

The Forest Legacy Program will help protect areas in Central Oregon. "The bill is a seminal development in the continuing effort to preserve Skyline Forest," said Brad Chalfant, Executive Director of Deschutes Basin Land Trust, who also attended the ceremony. "As the Land Trust seeks ways to acquire Skyline Forest, the forest bill provides us a key funding opportunity."

This legislation follows two years after Burley championed the bi-partisan Community Forest Authority Act that is now being utilized west of Bend on Skyline Forest. The Deschutes County CFA is the first of its kind in the nation. The act allows communities to make long-term land management decisions for local forest resources, conserve wildlife habitat and provide recreational opportunities while sustainably harvesting timber and providing jobs for Oregonians.

HB 2468 passed the House 44-14 and the Senate 17-8. It was signed by Governor Kulongoski on June 20, 2007.

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