

BOC General Meeting – April 4, 2018 10:00AM

Re: Agenda Item 12C

**Tim Palmer Letter by Commissioner Gold**

Copies provided by John Jezuit, Administrative Assistant

Statement from Tim Palmer, PO 1286, Port Orford, OR 97465  
For the April 4, 2018 County Commissioners meeting

Dear Commissioners:

I'm writing this statement for the April 4 meeting record in regards to Commissioner Boice's proposed letter to our U.S. senators.

Before addressing that letter's recommendation, let me point out that the letter is replete with fallacies. It states that "almost one-fifth of our county land mass suffered with the severe burn category." What was the source of this information?

The authoritative source on this topic—the federal government's Rapid Assessment Team—reported on October 27, 2017 that, in fact, 10,684 acres in the Chetco Bar Fire burned at high severity. Curry County has 1.041 million acres. That means that 1 percent of the county burned at high severity, not 20 percent as stated in the letter.

The letter reports that 80 percent of the Brookings-Harbor Watershed was "lost." A watershed is "the region or area drained by a river or stream." Part of that region was burned; none of it was "lost." It's still there. And it has burned many times in the past and yet has continued to supply pure water and robust fisheries for our community.

But more to the point: If you want to save the government a lot of money, and persuade the Forest Service to focus on fire prevention and public safety, then limit this investigation to the question of why home owners were not afforded better fire protection services from the fire trucks that stood by (as reported by some of our home owners). Looking to the question of why the fire was not put out sooner, you'll encounter endless subjective debate about whether fire fighters' lives should have been risked for questionable advantage in fire suppression.

Our commissioners would serve our county far better if they would spend their time on the issues of fire safety for which you are actually responsible: warning, emergency services, evacuation plans, codes, zoning, and assistance for voluntary fire proofing.

Take a lesson from Sonoma County in California—now being challenged for the inadequacy of its warning and evacuation procedures. If a dreaded mega-fire endangers Brookings or our other communities in the future, it will be because of uncontrollable climatic extremes of drought and horrific winds, which nobody can control. It will not be because dead trees were salvage-logged or not, and not because of the decisions that were made by federal officials in the summer of 2017.

Those who will inevitably be in danger in the future will depend on the county's effectiveness in warning, communications, and evacuation. This is where the county

can and must be effective, and I seriously doubt that anyone can claim we are better positioned for the challenge than was Sonoma County a year ago.

I urge the commissioners, once again, to do the jobs we elected you to do and the jobs that we pay you to do, and quit wasting your time and our money on matters beyond your responsibility and expertise.