



Oakridge Firewood Vendor - Public Private Partnership

A group of partners in Oakridge, OR have come together to support a commercial firewood business. Partners in the effort include: City of Oakridge, Inbound LLC, Southern Willamette Forest Collaborative (SWFC), Lane County and Oregon Department of Forestry. This program is one measure to help Oakridge reach its air attainment goals for fine particulate matter. During the winter months, Oakridge air quality is susceptible to high concentrations of wood smoke that is hazardous to health and hinders economic development. Many residents rely on wood as a primary heat source, and obtaining high quality, seasoned firewood is a challenge without a firewood vendor in the area.

Community Firewood Program: In 2015, the City of Oakridge, SWFC, Lane Regional Air Protection Agency, Inbound LLC and other partners launched a pilot Community Firewood Program to provide seasoned firewood at affordable rates to the community. The program converts logging slash to firewood, employing off-season Inbound firefighters to process the firewood. The program has been highly successful providing firewood to those in need and sharing information about home heating advisories, clean burning practices, weatherization and home heating programs. The long-term sustainability of this program relies on a successful transition to a commercial firewood business that serves a broader market.

Commercial Firewood Public-Private Partnership: Inbound LLC is interested launching a commercial firewood startup during the wildfire off-season. Lane County has offered a cash-match grant to purchase equipment, and the City of Oakridge will provide a location to process and store firewood. In exchange for public support, the private commercial business will supply affordable, seasoned firewood to qualified Oakridge sole source or low income homes for at least five years. A startup program could employ 5-7 firefighters during the winter months to convert logging slash to firewood. To be sustainable, the program would need an annual supply of 180,000 board feet of timber byproducts to produce approximately 400 cords of firewood.

Firewood Feasibility Study: A feasibility study will assess the viability of a commercial firewood business by examining regional business markets, logical growth strategies, and costs and constraints to obtain feedstock. The partners believe there is a realistic opportunity for a firewood business to serve a regional market, and over time expand into other small diameter wood products. Challenges to secure a long-term feedstock will need to be addressed. Each year, the Willamette National Forest harvests tens of millions of board feet, but administrative constraints make it difficult for the agency to sell low value wood byproducts on a secondary market and the timber industry has been reluctant to donate or sell the logging byproducts.