

Increased investment needed for wildfire workforce

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Oregon U.S. Senator Ron Wyden has sounded the alarm at a U.S. Senate hearing on the devastating impact of the climate crisis, increasingly dangerous wildfires and the need for additional investments in the wildfire resilience workforce in Oregon and nationwide.

“The reality is these fires are not your grandfather’s fires. They are bigger, hotter, more powerful and we get them almost year round,” Wyden said during a Senate Budget Committee hearing March 8.

Wyden asked Michael Wara, Director of the Climate and Energy Policy Program at the Stanford Woods Institute for the Environment, about the need for additional federal investments in the wildfire resilience workforce and increased pay for firefighters.

“The Forest Service needs to offer competitive wages and they are moving in that direction,” Wara responded. “I think that’s really important and we need to double down on that.”

Wyden requested a written report from the Climate and Energy Policy Program on how Congress can help further professionalize the wildfire resilience workforce with increased wages, training, and technology.

Last year, Wyden successfully pressed the Biden administration to increase wildland firefighter pay as required by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.

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