

Merkley, Wyden sound the alarm, urge more funding to address Sudden Oak Death

February 25, 2022



Oregon's U.S. Senators Jeff Merkley and Ron Wyden recently sent a letter to the Bureau of Land Management strongly urging the agency to put funds from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act to go towards the mitigation and treatment of Sudden Oak Death, a disease that poses severe economic and environmental threats to counties in Southern Oregon.

"Sudden Oak Death poses a significant threat to a multitude of ecosystems and plant species and has already killed millions of tanoaks in southern Oregon and northern California," the senators wrote. "The disease has been in Curry County since 2001, but a new site was recently identified outside of the quarantine area. The state of Oregon has increased its investment in SOD treatments, but more funding is needed to treat the area currently infected. Without treatment, SOD would have serious economic impacts, including job losses, declines timber harvest and other significant economic and cultural impacts."

Merkley has been a long-time leader in fighting the spread of Sudden Oak Death, and ensuring Oregon continues receive the federal funding and resources needed to combat this disease. He convened a task force in 2017 to develop a collaboration-based action plan to contain Sudden Oak Death and last year secured funding for key Oregon research programs on Sudden Oak Death and to support ongoing efforts to treat Sudden Oak Death.

Sudden Oak Death, caused by the non-native pathogen *Phytophthora ramorum* (*P. ramorum*), is a devastating disease that has killed hundreds of thousands of tanoak trees in Curry County. It was first detected there in 2001; about one-third of the county has since been affected. In Oregon, it occurs only in the forests of southwest Curry County, where a containment program is in place to slow the spread. Continued treatment may constrain SOD south of the Rogue River to 2028 and within Curry County in 2038. If further measures aren't taken, it could spread north into Coos County and west into Josephine County in coming years.