

REVENUE: May have revenue impact, statement not yet issued

FISCAL: Fiscal statement issued

Action:	Do Pass and Be Referred to the Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources by prior reference
Vote:	5 - 3 - 1
Yeas:	Bonamici, Cannon, Gelser, Kotek, Greenlick
Nays:	Bruun, Flores, Maurer
Exc.:	Richardson
Prepared By:	Sandy Thiele-Cirka, Administrator
Meeting Dates:	4/6 (Full), 4/13 (Full)

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES: Prohibits open field burning, stack burning, pile burning and propane flaming. Requires registration for open burning of agricultural waste. Establishes Open Burning Management Account and continuously appropriates moneys in account to Department of Environmental Quality for smoke management program. Declares an emergency, effective on passage.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Review of field burning emissions, both solid and liquid particles
- Importance of smoke management and monitoring
- Effects on health from field burning: aggravating factor for people with airway diseases long-term damage to the lungs
- Air quality impacts to residents in regions where field burning occur
- Review of particulate matter National Ambient Air Quality Standards
- Field burning emissions represents approximately two percent of total particulate emissions in the Willamette Valley
- Overview of comparative open field burning data

EFFECT OF COMMITTEE AMENDMENT: No amendment.

BACKGROUND: Field burning disposes of leftover straw and stubble on fields after grass seed harvesting. It controls weeds, insects and plant diseases, helps maintain grass seed purity, reduces the need to use pesticides and herbicides, and improves yields. The practice began more than 50 years ago, with as much as 250,000 acres being burned in the mid 1980s.

In 1991, passage of HB 3343 began a phase-down of field burning, with the acreage limit reduced from 180,000 to 40,000 acres. The current limit of 65,000 is based on 40,000 acres plus a 25,000-acre limitation for certain fire-dependent grass species and grasses grown on highly erodible soils on steep slopes. Although state law allows the burning of 65,000 acres, over the past five years actual burning has averaged about 50,000 acres. Field burning typically starts mid-July and ends mid-October, with a majority of burning in August and early September; most fields are not burned every year. To avoid smoke impacts in populated areas, burning is permitted only after careful evaluation of weather conditions using the latest meteorological forecasting techniques. About 75 percent of all the acreage is burned on just 10 to 15 days during the summer. Currently there are about 150 growers who burn in the Willamette Valley. The Smoke Management Program is funded exclusively through grower fees. In 1995, Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) was directed by HB 3044 to operate the entire field burning program through a contractual agreement with Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ).

Field burning smoke is comprised of several pollutants that have the potential to cause health problems, depending on the level and duration of exposure. Field burning smoke contains fine particulate matter, which can be inhaled into the lungs. Additionally, field burning smoke contains carbon monoxide and carcinogenic compounds such as polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, benzene, aldehydes and metals. Efforts are made to conduct field burning under optimum smoke dispersal conditions; however, when smoke impacts occur they rarely cause air quality to exceed the federal fine particulate health standard. Field burning smoke impacts are of relatively short duration, and occur during the summer months, when particulate air pollution levels are generally much lower than they are in winter months.