

Joint Committee on Ways and Means

Carrier – House: Rep. Garrard
Carrier – Senate: Sen. Nelson

Revenue: No revenue impact

Fiscal: Minimal fiscal impact, no statement issued

Action: Do Pass as Amended and Be Printed A-Engrossed

Vote: 20 – 0 – 1

House – Yeas: D. Edwards, Galizio, Garrard, Hanna, Jenson, Morgan, Nathanson, Nolan, Shields
– Nays:
– Exc:

Senate – Yeas: Bates, Carter, Devlin, Gordly, Johnson, Morse, Nelson, Schrader, Verger, Westlund, Whitsett
– Nays:
– Exc: Winters

Prepared By: Susie Jordan, Legislative Fiscal Office

Meeting Date: 6/8/07

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES: The bill provides certain landowners the ability to create rangeland fire protection associations. It gives the State Forester authority to enter into cooperative agreements or contract with rangeland protection associations to protect rangeland from fire. The bill authorizes the State Forester to assist rangeland protection associations with training, acquisition of firefighting equipment and provision of liability insurance. Directs State Forester or rangeland protection association to provide protection after the State Board of Forestry determines that rangeland is included in the rangeland protection system in liability exemption. Declares an emergency and takes effect July 1, 2007. Appropriates moneys from the General Fund to the Oregon Department of Forestry for the purpose of providing assistance to rangeland protection associations.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Ability of volunteer associations to contain fires
- Need for training and liability insurance
- Fiscal impact to be addressed in HB 5024

EFFECT OF COMMITTEE AMENDMENT: Removes General Fund appropriation to the Oregon Department of Forestry.

BACKGROUND: Ironside Rangeland Fire Protection Association, formed in 1964, is a volunteer program that provides rangeland fire protection services on private rangeland property in Malheur County. From 1998 to 2006, seven additional volunteer rangeland fire protection associations were formed in eastern Oregon. Currently, there is no fire protection program for private rangeland property except for these volunteer groups. Without preventive measures, fires that start on private rangeland can escalate and spread to publicly owned properties. Senate Bill 450 allows owners of rangeland to form organizations for the purpose of protecting rangeland from fire when their property is outside of any forest protection district. The measure includes a request for \$60,000 from the General Fund to support the eight existing rangeland fire protection associations and an additional two associations that are in formative stages.