

REVENUE: No revenue impact

FISCAL: Minimal fiscal impact, no statement issued

Action: Do Pass
Vote: 5 - 0 - 0
Yeas: Baertschiger, Burdick, Close, Prozanski, Roblan
Nays: 0
Exc.: 0
Prepared By: Racquel Rancier, Administrator
Meeting Dates: 2/7

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES: Allows representatives of forestland owners, or when applicable, representatives of grazing landowners, to be appointed on forestland classification committees. Authorizes State Forester to intervene in appeal and defend forestland classification committee order. Effective on the 91st day after adjournment sine die.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Including representatives of landowners allows counties and corporations to designate employees to participate on forestland classification committees
- Excluding representatives of landowners limits participation in forestland classification committees
- Classification committees lack fiscal resources and access to legal representation to defend an appeal
- State Forester would defend a classification order using existing Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) budgeted resources

EFFECT OF COMMITTEE AMENDMENT: No amendment.

BACKGROUND: The ODF provides wildfire protection on approximately 16 million acres of private, county, state and federally owned forestland in Oregon. Counties may establish forestland classification committees to identify forest and grazing land within their boundaries for purposes of the ODF Fire Protection program. Until 2009, the law required the county governing body to appoint at least one forest landowner, or representative thereof, and when applicable, one grazing landowner, or representative thereof. The language referring to “representatives” was removed during updates to the statute in 2009. As a result, only landowners are eligible to serve on forestland classification committees.

A public hearing must be held on a preliminary forestland classification; thereafter, final classifications may be appealed to the appropriate circuit court. Currently, the statute does not specify who may intervene in appeals or defend a classification ordered by a committee.

Senate Bill 31 will allow representatives of forest and grazing landowners to serve on forestland classification committees and authorizes the State Forester to intervene if a forestland classification committee’s final order is appealed in circuit court.