

The Association of Oregon Counties Support HB 2997 and HB 2998

To: Senate Transportation and Economic Development
From: Mark Nystrom, Policy Manager, Association of Oregon Counties
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The Association of Oregon Counties support HB 2997 and HB 2998. The counties believe that these bills create a win-win situation for Eastern Oregon. With increased juniper management the State will see multiple benefits:

- A decrease in a species that is quickly taking over the sage brush territory.
- An increase in the quality of habitat for the greater sage grouse, a species that is being considered for endangered species status.
- An increase in jobs for harvesters, haulers, mill owners and distributors of juniper based projects.
- A decrease in the demand on water which is a scarce resource.
- A renewal of a habitat that has been overwhelmed by juniper due to fire suppression.
- A creation of a market for juniper products.
- A source of fuel for biomass heat and co-generation.
- Continued coordination between stake holders in Eastern Oregon.

The Association of Oregon Counties would like to thank the different state and federal agencies, the governor's office, private industries and Sustainable Northwest for their continued commitment to the juniper efforts. There is clearly a momentum to this issue and the counties are enthusiastic partners who look forward to supporting the juniper efforts. Thank you for considering HB 2997 and HB 2998.

Please contact AOC Policy Manager Mark Nystrom with any questions with this testimony.