



# Oregon

Kate Brown, Governor



OREGON INVASIVE SPECIES COUNCIL

May 7, 2015

Rep. Brad Witt, Chair  
House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources  
Oregon State Capitol  
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Relating to Senate Bill 209, clarifying voting status of members and establishing mandatory appointment of State Invasive Species Council Coordinator.

Invasive species are a subset of exotic, non-native organisms that cause often irreversible environmental harm to Oregon's natural resources and are a source of significant economic costs to industry, businesses, landowners and citizens of the State. Twenty-five of Oregon's most significant invasive noxious weeds cause an estimated annual loss of about \$83.5 million to the state's economy, a figure that could be well over \$1 billion if not for state, county, federal and local efforts. Notorious invasive species, such as Zebra mussels and emerald ash borers –which have yet to invade Oregon – are capable of causing hundreds of millions of dollars in damages to Oregon's economy. In the U.S., invasive species cause \$120 billion in damages annually, and worldwide they are the second leading cause of native species extinctions, responsible for disrupting ecosystem functioning and decreasing natural resource productivity.

During the 2001 Oregon Legislative session, the Oregon Invasive Species Council (OISC) was created in ORS 570.750 – 570.810 to fulfill the mission of "protecting Oregon's economy and natural resources by conducting a coordinated and thorough effort to keep invasive species out of Oregon..." The OISC is currently comprised of 17 members, of which there are seven ex-officio state agencies.

Coordination among the OISC member agencies and stakeholders is a primary function of the Council and a critical component of our State's preparedness for invasive species. In recent years the OISC Coordinator position has resulted in a great return on investment for the state. Between 2010 and 2014 - while the state was contributing approximately \$50,000/biennium to support 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of a coordinators salary – the Council's grant development efforts and ability to leverage funds from other sources resulted in roughly \$300,000/biennium in additional funds to support invasive species outreach, education and coordination efforts in our region. However, stable backing to fund the coordinator position has challenged the Council's ability to attract and keep qualified individuals in the position.

In the Governor's Recommended Budget for FY15-17, an additional \$100,000 has been budgeted for OISC operations beyond the \$50,000 base funding. This earmarked funding would greatly enhance the effectiveness of the Council in meeting its mission for the State, including hiring a Council coordinator.

Language in SB209 would make the appointment of a coordinator mandatory for the OISC. If SB209 is passed and insufficient funds are available for a contracted coordinator, the OISC could still meet the SB209 requirements by appointing a special assistant as the Coordinator (e.g. current staff from one of the member agencies could serve as OISC coordinator). Funding for the position would likely have to come from a currently funded invasive species program at Oregon Department of Agriculture, the current fiscal agent of the Council. Redirecting program funds from survey/monitoring to the Council coordinator could hurt Oregon's chances at early detection of priority invasive species. Alternatively, the ODA could enter into cooperative agreements with other OISC member agencies to fully fund the coordinator position.

In addition to elevating the importance of maintaining the OISC coordinator position, the bill also clarifies the voting rights status of the 10 appointed members of the Council. The existing statute was unclear on this point and the Council supports the bill as introduced because it aligns with the Council's mission and goals, and validates our current operating practices.

We respectfully thank members of the House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources for their deliberation on this bill, and we offer our technical expertise on any invasive species issue to the State of Oregon as a service to the Committee.

Sincerely,

Wyatt Williams, PhD  
2015 Chair, Oregon Invasive Species Council  
Invasive Species Specialist  
Oregon Department of Forestry  
Salem, OR