

Seventy-Eighth Oregon Legislative Assembly - 2015 Regular Session
STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY
House Committee On Agriculture and Natural Resources

MEASURE: HB 2997

Fiscal: Fiscal impact issued

Revenue: No Revenue Impact

Action Date: 03/24/15

Action: Do Pass. Refer To Ways And Means.

Meeting Dates: 02/26, 03/05, 03/24

Vote:
Yeas: 8 - Esquivel, Frederick, Gorsek, Krieger, McKeown, McLain, Whitsett, Witt
Exc: 1 - Barreto

Prepared By: Chuck Gallagher, Committee Administrator

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Appropriates \$250,000 to Oregon Business Development Department to fund efforts by National Policy Consensus Center of Portland State University and community organizations to provide assistance to businesses engaged in western juniper harvesting or manufacturing and promote liaison efforts between public and private activities relating to western juniper and wildlife management. Declares emergency, effective July 1, 2015.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Ecology of western juniper
- Environmental benefits of juniper removal and restoration work
- Creating jobs in rural and eastern Oregon
- Commercial value of western juniper
- Potential for job creation through investments in juniper industry
- Finding skilled workers, lack of technical and entrepreneurial experience
- Need for increased infrastructure, workforce training and early support for industry
- Developing certification program and export opportunities
- Concerns about harvesting of old-growth juniper, regulation by ODA, and Oregon Forest Protection Act exemption

EFFECT OF COMMITTEE AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

Western juniper grows across more than 6 million acres of central and eastern Oregon. The majority of area forested by juniper is split between Bureau of Land Management and privately owned lands. Western juniper in Oregon has increased dramatically since the 1930s due to land management decisions, notably wildfire suppression. Juniper expansion affects plant communities, water availability, fire cycles, forage production and wildlife habitat and biodiversity.

House Bill 2997 would appropriate \$250,000 to the Oregon Business Development Department to provide assistance to businesses engaged in western juniper harvesting or manufacturing and promote liaison efforts between public and private activities relating to western juniper and wildlife management.