

STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY**House Committee On Agriculture and Natural Resources****Fiscal:** Fiscal impact issued**Revenue:** No Revenue Impact**Action Date:** 03/24/15**Action:** Do Pass As Amended, Be Printed Engrossed, And Bill Be Referred 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:**

Requires Oregon Business Development Department (Department) to establish program to provide economic development assistance in form of loans or grants to persons engaged in western juniper harvesting or manufacturing. Establishes conditions for issuing loans and grants and authorizes forgiveness of loans under certain conditions. Requires Department to establish programs to provide technical assistance and workforce training to persons engaged in western juniper harvesting or manufacturing. Requires Department to establish program to identify and map high-quality stands of western juniper that can be harvested in commercially and environmentally reasonable manners and make information available free of charge. Establishes western juniper Industry Fund and appropriates funds. Requires Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) to develop regulations for western juniper harvesting. Declares western juniper harvesting to be agricultural activity and exempts harvesting conducted in accordance with ODA regulations from the Oregon Forest Practices Act (OFPA). Declares emergency, effective July 1, 2015.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Environmental benefits of juniper removal and restoration work
- Creating jobs in rural and eastern Oregon
- Potential for job creation through investments in juniper industry
- Need for increased infrastructure, workforce training and early support for industry
- Concerns about harvesting of old-growth juniper, regulation by ODA, and OFPA exemption

EFFECT OF COMMITTEE AMENDMENT:

Removes provisions designating juniper harvesting as agricultural activity to be regulated by Oregon Department of Agriculture. Authorizes Oregon Business Development Department to administer funds to carry out activities either directly or in coordination with third-party contractors identified by the agency. Appropriates funds to Higher Education Coordinating Commission to be expended to allow Institute of Natural Resources personnel at Portland State University to carry out juniper mapping activities.

BACKGROUND:

Western juniper grows across more than 6 million acres of central and eastern Oregon. The majority of juniper forested areas are 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 2998 A would require the Oregon Business Development Department to establish programs to provide economic development assistance, technical assistance and workforce training to persons engaged in western juniper harvesting or manufacturing and establish a program to identify and map high-quality stands of western juniper in the state. House Bill 2998 A would establish the western juniper Industry Fund separate from the General Fund and appropriate \$900,000 to the Fund for the biennium beginning July 1, 2015. The measure would also require the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) to develop regulations for western juniper harvesting, declare harvesting to be agricultural activity and exempt harvesting conducted in accordance with ODA regulations from the Oregon Forest Practices Act.