



Oregon

Kate Brown, Governor

Department of Forestry

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"STEWARDSHIP IN FORESTRY"

February 9, 2016

The Honorable Brad Witt, Chair
House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee
900 Court Street NE, Room 347
Salem, OR 97310

RE: HB 4007 – Allows County Development of Rangeland Protection Associations

Dear Chair Witt and Members of the Committee:

The Department of Forestry appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony regarding HB 4007.

HB 4007 provides an additional method of organizing for fire protection on non-federal rangeland to that which already exists in ORS 477.315 to 477.325. This method would allow for the formation of a Rangeland Protection Association through action of a county governing body, as opposed to the current method of landowners coordinating through the Board of Forestry to establish an RPA.

This bill retains the existing mechanisms for cooperation among the RPA, the Board of Forestry and ODF, regardless of the method of organizing the RPA. As such, all RPA's are expected to submit annual budgets to the Board of Forestry for approval and will be expected to enter into a cooperative agreement with ODF regarding the association's protection of rangeland and ODF's provision of support to the RPA. Cooperative agreements detail ODF's ability to assist the RPA with training association members, acquiring firefighting equipment through federal surplus programs and – with limited financial assistance – paying for liability insurance or other administrative expenses of the RPA.

RPA's are highly valued partners in Oregon's complete and coordinated fire protection system. There are currently 20, all volunteer, RPAs operating in eastern Oregon, providing protection for 4.6 million acres of private and publicly owned rangeland.

The Department of Forestry again thanks the committee for the opportunity to provide testimony regarding HB 4007. I would be happy to answer any questions.

Sincerely,

Doug Grafe
Division Chief
Fire Protection Division

c: Doug Decker, State Forester
Richard Whitman, Governor's Natural Resources Assistant
ODF Executive Team