

HB 2535 -1 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

House Committee On Agriculture and Natural Resources

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Sub-Referral To: Joint Committee On Ways and Means

Meeting Dates: 2/28, 4/18

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Establishes Pollinator Forage Pilot Program Fund (Fund) to be used by Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) to conduct four-year pilot program evaluating options, methods and costs of replacing noxious weeds that provide high levels of pollen and nectar to pollinating insects with noninvasive forage plants that serve same purpose for pollinating insects. Directs ODA, through State Weed Board, to identify such noxious weeds and noninvasive forage plants that could replace them. Authorizes State Weed Board to consider properties owned and occupied by public bodies that are infested with noxious weeds for pilot program. Authorizes State Weed Board to identify and prioritize private lands infested with noxious weeds and encourage participation in pilot program. Directs ODA to provide owners and occupants in pilot program with seeds or plant starts of noninvasive forage plants, care advice and other goods and services to promote success of the plants. Directs ODA to conduct survey of pilot program participants on best choices for noninvasive forage plants for various pollinating insects; good practices for promoting successful growth of noninvasive forage plants; effects of noninvasive forage plants on pollinating insect populations compared to existing noxious weeds; and other information deemed beneficial for assessing effect of pilot program. Requires ODA to report findings and any related recommendations to Legislative Assembly by September 15, 2022. Specifies that unexpended and unobligated balance in Fund on January 2, 2023 shall be transferred to ODA account to be used for weed control grants. Declares emergency, measure takes effect July 1, 2017.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Pilot program as complement to noxious weed control efforts
- Bayer Feed-a-Bee Initiative
- Varroa mite and other dangers to bees

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

-1 Replaces measure. Directs Director of Agriculture to consult with State Weed Board and establish four-year pilot program through Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) to control noxious weeds and replace them with pollinator forage species. Authorizes ODA to engage with county and special weed control districts and other public and private entities to coordinate pilot program. Allows ODA to seek gifts, grants or donations from public and private sources for pilot program.

BACKGROUND:

A weed is designated noxious when it is considered by a governmental agency to be injurious to public health, agriculture, recreation, wildlife, or property (Oregon Administrative Rule 603-052-1200). The Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA), through its Noxious Weed Control Program and with the help of county weed programs around the state, coordinates and implements noxious weed control projects. The State Weed Board represents weed control interests from across Oregon and guides statewide noxious weed control priorities, awards noxious weed control targeted lottery funds and develops and maintains the State Noxious Weed List.

An unintended consequence of noxious weed control is the eradication of some plants that supply pollen and nectar to pollinating insects. Pollinators, which include some bird and bat species and a variety of insect species, assist with

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the reproduction of native plants and many crops.

House Bill 2535 would require ODA to conduct a four-year pilot program to replace noxious weeds with noninvasive forage plants that offer similar benefits to pollinating insects. The bill would establish the Pollinator Forage Pilot Program Fund, the moneys from which would be used by the State Weed Board to pilot the replacement of noxious weeds and conduct research on the relative benefits of the program. The bill requires ODA to report back to the Legislative Assembly on the results of the pilot program and recommendations no later than September 15, 2022.