

SB 1515 -1 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

Senate Committee On Wildfire Reduction and Recovery

Prepared By: Laura Kentnesse, LPRO Analyst

Meeting Dates: 2/3, 2/5

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Requires the office of the State Treasurer (OST) to research the creation of a wildfire workforce foundation to support forest restoration and wildfire reduction through youth workforce development programs. Requires OST to: conduct market, legal, and fiscal research; identify potential collaborators; inventory existing wildfire workforce programs; ensure the foundation receives private and public funds, including federal support if possible; and create a case statement for potential donors. Requires OST to report the results to a legislative committee related to wildfire by September 15, 2020. Declares emergency, effective on passage.

REVENUE: May have revenue impact, but no statement yet issued.

FISCAL: May have fiscal impact, but no statement yet issued.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

-1 Replaces the office of the State Treasurer with the Higher Education Coordinating Commission for the purpose of carrying out the functions of the bill. Clarifies that the requirement to create a case statement for potential foundation donors should emphasize the potential benefits for private sector businesses and foundations.

REVENUE: May have revenue impact, but no statement yet issued.

FISCAL: May have fiscal impact, but no statement yet issued.

BACKGROUND:

Several youth workforce programs that implement projects to improve forest health and reduce forest fuel loads operate in Oregon. These programs offer young people an education-based work experience modeled after the Civilian Conservation Corps of the 1930s. The Oregon Office of Workforce Investments administers and supports two of these workforce programs, the state AmeriCorps and Oregon Youth Corps. The state AmeriCorps program grantees operate in metro and rural counties to improve public lands through habitat restoration, tree planting, trail maintenance, and wildfire reduction activities. The Oregon Youth Corps provides young people in nearly every county forest health jobs that include slash piling, removing invasive fuels, building lines for prescribed burns, and restoring habitat in the aftermath of fire. In addition, the Eugene-based Northwest Youth Corps also operates in Oregon. The organization recently started a Wildland Urban Interface fuels reduction pilot project in the Southeast neighborhood of Eugene. The goal of the project is to educate property owners on the value of defensible space by offering evaluations and consultation, educational resources, and prescription-based fuel management on both private and public lands. The youth crews work in partnership with the Oregon Department of Forestry, Eugene Public Works, and Eugene Springfield Fire to achieve project outcomes.

While no wildfire workforce foundation currently exists in Oregon, the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation is a similar concept in that it builds public-private partnerships and investments to implement mission-driven work at a landscape scale.

Senate Bill 1515 would require the office of the State Treasurer to develop a privately and publicly funded wildfire workforce foundation to support forest restoration and wildfire reduction through youth workforce development programs.