

HB 2986 A STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

House Committee On Climate, Energy, and Environment

Action Date: 03/13/23

Action: Do pass with amendments and be referred to Ways and Means by prior reference.
(Printed A-Eng.)

Vote: 8-1-1-0

Yeas: 8 - Helm, Kropf, Levy B, Levy E, Marsh, Osborne, Owens, Pham K

Nays: 1 - Wallan

Exc: 1 - Andersen

Fiscal: Fiscal impact issued

Revenue: No revenue impact, statement issued (Indeterminate Impact)

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Meeting Dates: 1/25, 3/13

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Directs Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) to establish a Prescribed Fire Capacity Grant Program to 1) increase the pace and scale of the use of prescribed fire and cultural burning and 2) reduce barriers for conducting prescribed fires and cultural burning. Authorizes ODF to award grants to local governments, nongovernmental organizations, federally recognized Indian tribes in this state, businesses, and private landowners to support workforce development, add capacity to conduct prescribed fires and cultural burns, and assist with funding equipment and personnel that are needed for conducting prescribed fires and cultural burns. Requires ODF, in implementing the program, to collaborate with other relevant state agencies, cultural fire practitioners, the Oregon Prescribed Fire Council, and Certified Burn Managers to establish guidelines governing the program and requirements for grantee reporting and implementation of grant-funded projects. Establishes Prescribed Fire Capacity Fund in State Treasury, separate and distinct from General Fund, to fund program. Appropriates \$5,000,000 to ODF out of General Fund for deposit into Prescribed Fire Capacity Fund. Sunsets Prescribed Fire Capacity Grant Program and Prescribed Fire Capacity Fund January 2, 2029. Declares emergency, effective on passage.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Forest management practices
- Role of federal government
- Regions where prescribed burning occurs

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

Removes direction to Oregon Department of Forestry to establish Prescribed Fire Capacity Grant Program **by rule**. Modifies grant criteria and eligibility.

BACKGROUND:

The U.S. Forest Service describes prescribed fires, also known as prescribed burns or controlled burns, as the "controlled application of fire by a team of fire experts under specified weather conditions to restore health to ecosystems that depend on fire." Such fires may be used to reduce the risk of large severe wildfires, increase public and firefighter safety, and to meet a variety of natural resource management objectives including habitat restoration, restoration or maintenance ecosystem health, and maintenance of vegetation treatments.

House Bill 2986 A directs the Oregon Department of Forestry to establish a Prescribed Fire Capacity Grant Program and establish a Prescribed Fire Capacity Fund.