

HB 3142 A STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY**House Committee On Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water**

Action Date: 03/21/23**Action:** Do pass with amendments and be referred to Ways and Means. (Printed A-Eng.)**Vote:** 9-0-0-0**Yeas:** 9 - Boice, Gamba, Hartman, Helm, Levy B, Marsh, McLain, Owens, Scharf**Fiscal:** Fiscal impact issued**Revenue:** No revenue impact**Prepared By:** Anna Glueder, LPRO Analyst**Meeting Dates:** 2/14, 3/21

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Requires the Oregon Department of Administrative Services (DAS) to provide grants to soil and water conservation districts and counties for the removal of western juniper. Limits grant uses to removal of western juniper in areas of greatest benefit to water resources and ecological health, to using methods and timing that reduce the risk of repropagation, and to use no more than eight percent of the grant amount to cover administrative expenses. Requires grant recipient to determine areas for western juniper treatment based on criteria from the western juniper management field guide developed by the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) including certain species prioritizations and canopy interspaces and to retain old growth juniper trees when selecting project sites and conducting treatment. Specifies that treatment sites must be at least 100 acres. Requires that prior to treatment, a pretreatment analysis must assess the risk for annual grass weeds and determine if reseeding is required based on the existing perennial understory. Requires that a post-treatment maintenance plan must be developed by the grant recipient. Requires fuel loads associated with western juniper treatment to be removed from the treatment site. Requires that any grazing plan for a treatment site must be developed in cooperation with the landowner and the applicable soil and water conservation district. Authorizes grant applicants to consult with governmental or nongovernmental experts, including Oregon State University (OSU), to identify target areas. Requires grant recipients to work with OSU to monitor program effects and provide quarterly and annual reports to DAS, to work with a local workforce development board to establish a workforce program for the workers involved with juniper removal, and prepare reports describing proposed, ongoing, or completed western juniper treatment including pre- and post-treatment site conditions, project methodology, and assessment of treatment effectiveness and submit them to Oregon State University (OSU) in a publicly available manner no later than two and five years after receiving a grant. Directs OSU to work with grant recipients to establish monitoring areas in central Oregon, Harney County, and Klamath County to monitor soil, water, and vegetation relationship in the over- and understory, soil moisture, springflow, streamflow, and weather, as well as other parameters for a period of at least five years. Appropriates \$350,000 General Fund moneys to DAS and requires the department to provide a grant to an organization formed pursuant to an inter-governmental agreement that operates in a selection of specified counties and is directed to coordinate efforts to identify and apply for funding sources applicable to western juniper treatment or other conservation projects, among cities, counties, or other organizations and coordinate among grant recipients. Appropriates a total of \$9 million General Fund moneys to DAS and specifies how these grant funds are to be split between soil and water conservation districts located in Crook, Jefferson, Klamath, Deschutes, Harney, Lake, and Wheeler Counties. Appropriates \$800,000 General Fund moneys to the Higher Education Coordinating Commission for distribution to OSU to participate in target area selection and monitoring. Requires DAS to dispense grants no later than July 1, 2023, or 60 days after the effective date of this Act, whichever is later. Declares emergency,

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effective on passage.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Overlap between measure and current juniper removal efforts through other programs
- Role of soil and water conservation districts
- Required maintenance post juniper removal
- Role of prescribed fire in juniper removal

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

Requires grant recipient to determine areas for western juniper treatment based on criteria from the western juniper management field guide developed by the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) including certain species prioritizations and canopy interspaces. Requires grant recipient to retain old growth juniper trees when selecting project sites and conducting treatment. Specifies that treatment sites must be at least 100 acres. Requires that prior to treatment, a pretreatment analysis must assess the risk for annual grass weeds and determine if reseeding is required based on the existing perennial understory. Requires that a post-treatment maintenance plan must be developed by the grant recipient. Requires fuel loads associated with western juniper treatment to be removed from the treatment site. Requires that any grazing plan for a treatment site must be developed in cooperation with the landowner and the applicable soil and water conservation district. Removes annual reporting requirement for the Oregon Department of Administrative Services (DAS). Requires grant recipient to prepare reports describing proposed, ongoing, or completed western juniper treatment including pre- and post-treatment site conditions, project methodology, and assessment of treatment effectiveness and submit them to Oregon State University (OSU) in a publicly available manner no later than two and five years after receiving a grant. Directs OSU to work with grant recipients to establish monitoring areas in central Oregon, Harney County, and Klamath County to monitor soil, water, and vegetation relationship in the over- and understory, soil moisture, springflow, streamflow, and weather, as well as other parameters for a period of at least five years. Appropriates \$350,000 General Fund moneys to DAS and requires the department to provide a grant to an organization formed pursuant to an inter-governmental agreement that operates in a selection of specified counties and is directed to coordinate efforts to identify and apply for funding sources applicable to western juniper treatment or other conservation projects, among cities, counties, or other organizations and coordinate among grant recipients.

BACKGROUND:

The western juniper (*Juniperus occidentalis*) thrives in arid high desert climate and is widely distributed across central and eastern Oregon. It is a native species to the state and has been estimated to have spread across nine million acres in the past 130 years. Mature junipers can have significant ecological impacts on the landscape by extracting up to 40 gallons of water per day from soil. Since 2005, the Bureau of Land Management has removed western juniper from over 173,000 acres in Oregon at a cost of \$22-\$150 per acre.

House Bill 3142 A would appropriate \$9.35 million General Fund moneys to the Oregon Department of Administrative Services to provide grants to soil and water conservation districts, certain organizations, and counties related to the removal of western juniper in areas of greatest benefit to water resources and ecological health. House Bill 3142 A would further appropriate \$800,000 General Fund moneys to the Higher Education Coordinating Commission for distribution to Oregon State University to support grant applicants and perform program monitoring.