

City of Prineville

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

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February 19, 2025

Representative Helm, Co-Chair
Representative Owens, Co-Chair
House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Support for HB 3135

Co-Chair Helm, Co-Chair Owens, and members of the committee,

My name is Eric Klann, City Engineer with the City of Prineville. On behalf of both the City of Prineville and Crook County, I am providing testimony in support of HB 3135.

Since the 1880s, juniper range has increased tenfold in the Central Oregon area due to a reduction in fire. Pre-European settlement, juniper was limited primarily to areas to that did not support fire on relatively unproductive soils. The species elbows out native sagebrush and grasses and wreaks havoc on watersheds. This bill will provide much needed funding for juniper remediation efforts which will provide a host of benefits including:

- **Groundwater availability**- western juniper are highly consumptive trees; only nine to 13 large junipers per acre can use all the water delivered in a 13" precipitation zone (353,002 gallons per acre of water lost). Removing juniper from encroachment areas allows this water to benefit native species, wildlife, groundwater stores, and hydrology.
- **Increase biodiversity**- juniper encroachment often leads to the decline of sagebrush and native grasses which are critical for the Greater Sage Grouse and a reduction in the diversity of forbs and grasses depended upon by pollinators and herbivores.
- **Reduce fire risk**- western juniper is not fire tolerant and can fuel intense and severe wildfires.
- **Improve soil health**- by allowing more moisture to reach the ground and support native grasses and sagebrush rather than be intercepted by the large canopies of western junipers.

The City of Prineville has been pursuing development of a 43 MW biomass plant, which would utilize western juniper waste as a fuel source. This would help to create a market for the waste material thereby increasing the pace and scale of remediation efforts. I strongly encourage you to support this bill for the many benefits it will provide to these regions and their watersheds, wildlife, and overall ecological health.

Sincerely,

Eric Klann
City Engineer