

78th Oregon Legislative Assembly - 2016 Regular Session
PRELIMINARY STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY
House Committee On Agriculture and Natural Resources

MEASURE: HB 4007

Fiscal: Has minimal fiscal impact

Revenue: No Revenue Impact

Action Date:

Action:

Meeting Dates: 02/09

Prepared By: Dan Roper, Committee Administrator

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Expands definition of rangeland protection association (RPA) to include entities organized with approval of county governing body to be cost-neutral part of emergency management program in county having 200,000 or more acres of rangeland outside of any forest protection district and not protected by existing RPA established by rangeland owners under ORS 477.320. Declares emergency, effective upon passage.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Existing need to increase fire suppression in rural Oregon counties
- Unfunded mandates to state and federal entities to provide wildfire suppression to private lands in rural counties
- Major cost to county - insurance costs and workers compensation
- Concerns over additional taxation on property owners
- The role of ranchers within an RPA
- Cost to state for RPAs, return on investment of state funds
- Process for creating RPA and relationship with Oregon Department of Forestry
- Approximately 20 RPAs with over 800 members protecting over 4 million acres in Oregon

EFFECT OF COMMITTEE AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

Any group of rangeland owners within a rangeland protection system established under ORS 477.320 and lying wholly outside any forest protection district, may organize a rangeland protection association (RPA) for the purpose of protecting rangeland from fire. The State Forester may enter into cooperative agreements or contracts with a RPA for the purpose of providing organizational assistance, training association members, and acquiring firefighting equipment. The Forester may also assist associations with payment for liability insurance and other administrative expenses. The costs of assistance to RPAs may not be paid from funds assessed from forestland owners within a forest protection district.

ORS 477.320 authorizes rangeland owners to request the State Board of Forestry (Board) hold a hearing on the subject of providing protection from fire for rangeland. The Board determines whether the rangeland should be included within a protection system, establishes the extent and type of protection to be provided in cooperation with interested persons, and directs the Forester or RPA to provide the protection. Such protection is commensurate with the values and uses of the rangeland to be protected. For the purpose of providing such protection, the Forester and RPA may enter into cooperative agreements or contracts with each other and with landowners, individuals, associations, corporations, road districts, rural fire protection districts or agencies of the federal government.

House Bill 4007 would expand the definition of rangeland protection association.