

SB 590 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

Senate Committee On Natural Resources and Wildfire Recovery

Action Date: 03/03/21

Action: Do pass and requesting referral to Ways and Means.

Vote: 4-1-0-0

Yeas: 4 - Golden, Kennemer, Patterson, Prozanski

Nays: 1 - Heard

Fiscal: Fiscal impact issued

Revenue: No revenue impact

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Meeting Dates: 2/10, 3/3

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Includes land used primarily for cultivating crops within the definition of “rangeland” for the purposes of organizing a rangeland protection association and providing fire protection for rangeland.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- 2018 Substation Fire
- Farmers and ranchers as first responders to fire
- Access to surplus equipment and mutual aid coordination
- Rangeland Protection Associations in Oregon
- Fiscal impact to the Oregon Department of Forestry

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

Over one million acres of the state are referred to as "under or unprotected lands" that lack immediate access to statewide severity resources under the Conflagration Act, as well as systems for mutual aid agreements in the event of fire. These under or unprotected lands include wheat fields and other land for crop cultivation.

Rangeland Protection Associations (RPA) are one option for extending fire protection to these lands. RPAs are all-volunteer crews of rangeland owners with training and legal authority to respond to fires on private and state "rangeland" in remote landscapes where there is no existing state or local fire protection. However, RPAs are currently restricted from responding on land used for cultivating crops because "rangeland" is defined in statute as land located east of the Cascade Mountains that contains isolated tracts of forestland not classified as Class 1, 2, or 3 forestland and not within a forest protection district, and/or that is primarily rangeland or undeveloped land, characterized by sagebrush, juniper, and related vegetation. This definition does not include land being used for crop cultivation.

Senate Bill 590 would include land used primarily for cultivating crops within the definition of “rangeland” for the purposes of organizing a rangeland protection association and providing fire protection for rangeland.