

HB 2985 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

House Committee On Climate, Energy, and Environment

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Sub-Referral To: Joint Committee On Ways and Means

Meeting Dates: 1/25

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Directs Department of Consumer and Business Services (DCBS) to establish Prescribed Fire Liability Pilot Program (Program) and administer Program or authorize Oregon Insurance Guaranty Association (Association) to administer program. Requires Program to meet certain criteria related to use of prescribed fire and cultural burning. Authorizes DCBS or Association to reimburse claims of up to \$1,000,000 related to a prescribed fire conducted or supervised by the State Forester, a forest protective association, or a Certified Burn Manager and a cultural burn conducted or supervised by a cultural fire practitioner. Establishes requirements for DCBS or Association for reimbursing claims. Requires DCBS to consult with other relevant state agencies, cultural fire practitioners, the State Forester, forest protective associations, and Certified Burn Managers to establish guidelines for the program; adopt the guidelines by rule; and make the guidelines publicly available on a DCBS website. Requires persons who interacts with an Indian tribe or cultural fire practitioner to respect tribal sovereignty, customs, and culture. Establishes Prescribed Fire Claims Fund (Fund) in State Treasury, separate and distinct from General Fund, for purposes related to program. Appropriates \$10,000,000 to department out of General Fund for deposit in Prescribed Fire Claims Fund. Sunsets Program and Fund January 2, 2028. Declares emergency, effective on passage.

Revenue: May have revenue impact, no statement yet issued

Fiscal: May have fiscal impact, no statement yet issued

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

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 2985 would establish a Prescribed Fire Liability Pilot Program and a Prescribed Fire Claims Fund.