

## SB 69 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

### Senate Committee On Natural Resources

---

**Prepared By:** Laura Kentnesse, LPRO Analyst

**Sub-Referral To:** Joint Committee On Ways and Means

**Meeting Dates:** 2/8

---

#### WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Directs the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission (Commission) to develop and adopt by rule an invasive grass pilot program in the Phillip W. Schneider Wildlife Area to increase habitat quality and forage for mule deer and livestock; increase site resistance to annual grass invasion; and increase understanding of the roles that soil microbes, organic matter, and nutrients play in affecting resistance to annual grass invasions. Requires rules provide for experimental restoration plots in cattle grazing enclosures within the wildlife area. Directs the Commission to prepare and submit a report on the implementation of the pilot program to a natural resources-related legislative committee by September 15, 2026. Repeals pilot program on January 2, 2027.

*FISCAL: May have fiscal impact, but no statement yet issued*

*REVENUE: May have revenue impact, but no statement yet issued*

#### ISSUES DISCUSSED:

##### EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

##### BACKGROUND:

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) owns or manages by agreement nearly 200,000 acres of land set aside for wildlife use and public recreation. The first wildlife area, Summer Lake Wildlife Area, was purchased in 1944. According to ODFW, most state-operated wildlife areas provide either marshes and wetlands for migratory waterfowl, or rangelands where big game animals can seek refuge from harsh winter weather.

The Phillip W. Schneider Wildlife Area was acquired in 1972 to protect and enhance winter habitat for the mule deer population in the upper John Day River, Aldrich Mountains, and eastern Ochoco Mountains.

Invasive annual grasses such as cheatgrass, medusahead, and venenata have been invading and dominating western landscapes including the Phillip W. Schneider Wildlife Area for decades. These species are widely viewed as some of the most damaging ecosystem stressors in these rangeland systems, and result in reduced wildlife habitat, livestock forage, and recreational opportunities. In addition, they increase fuel loads, which alters the frequency and intensity of fire regimes, and promotes near-monoculture reinvasion following the fires.

Senate Bill 69 would direct the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission to develop an invasive grass pilot program in the Phillip W. Schneider Wildlife Area for specified purposes.