

HB 2248 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

House Committee On Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water

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Meeting Dates: 2/16

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Directs the Oregon Water Resources Department and Oregon Department of Environmental Quality to jointly study the impacts of wildfire on the quality of streams and tributaries in consultation with other relevant state agencies. Specifies that minimum study requirements include water quality impacts of first rains post-wildfire as well as turbidity and sedimentation changes post-wildfire and their effects on salmonid habitat pools and spawning gravel. Directs departments to jointly submit findings to water-related interim legislative committees by September 15, 2024.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

Salmonids spawn in freshwater streams and migrate upstream into forested landscapes. Wildfire can impact these freshwater systems in many ways, including short term changes in temperature and nutrient levels as well as long term alterations of a river system by adding large amounts of woody debris to the stream environment. Additionally, the loss of vegetation and plant roots associated with large wildfires can affect soil stability and may increase the amount of sediment transported to local rivers by post-fire rain. The net effect of wildfires on salmonid habitat pools and spawning gravel in Oregon is not well understood.

House Bill 2248 would direct the Oregon Water Resources Department and Oregon Department of Environmental Quality to jointly study the impacts of wildfire on the quality of streams and tributaries with special focus on impacts to salmonid habitat pools, and to report their findings to water-related interim legislative committees by September 15, 2024.