

SB 355 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

Senate Committee On Energy and Environment

Action Date: 03/24/25

Action: Do pass and refer to Ways and Means by prior reference.

Vote: 4-1-0-0

Yeas: 4 - Golden, Pham, Smith DB, Sollman

Nays: 1 - Robinson

Fiscal: Fiscal impact issued

Revenue: No revenue impact

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Meeting Dates: 2/10, 3/24

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

The measure would appropriate \$1 million General Fund moneys to the Oregon Department of Forestry for a pilot grant program that promotes air curtain use for biochar production.

Detailed Summary:

Directs Oregon Forestry Department (ODF) to adopt rules to establish a wildfire management pilot grant program (Program) promoting the use of air curtains by people who make biochar. Requires ODF to develop criteria for receiving a grant and an application process that may require a grant recipient to report on the use of the funds. Appropriates \$1,000,000 from the General Fund to ODF for the biennium beginning on July 1, 2025, to fund the Program. Sunsets Program June 30, 2027. Declares emergency, effective on passage.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Examples of air curtain technology
- Cost of establishing the system
- Potential outcomes of wildfire management pilot grant program

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

Air curtain burners, also known as air curtain incinerators or fire boxes, were originally designed as pollution control devices for open burning. According to the U.S.D.A. Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Research Station article published in April 2024 "*Continuous in-woods production of biochar using a trailer-mounted air curtain burner*" air curtains can help reduce smoke and particulates from pile burning operations, more fully burn biomass residues, and eliminate the direct and intense fire contact that can harm soil beneath the slash pile. In addition, air curtains can be used to turn piles of wood waste into biochar, which is a carbon-rich soil amendment that can help restore degraded soils to encourage vegetative growth.