



February 18, 2025

Co-Chairs Helm and Owens and Members of the House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources and Water

Re: HB 3135 Juniper Removal

The Oregon Association of Conservation Districts represents Oregon's 45 Soil and Water Conservation Districts, special districts governed by elected boards. The Districts protect and enhance soil quality, water quality and quantity, and habitat by providing technical services and supporting voluntary conservation in partnership with private landowners and managers, and with federal, state and nonprofit partners.

The Soil and Water Conservation Districts in Central and Eastern Oregon have been working on juniper removal for over 10 years, beginning with the work to meet the protection of sage grouse habitat in conjunction with the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Bureau of Land Management, US Fish and Wildlife Service and partnering state agencies. In 2023 the legislature provided state funding to continue the work.

HB 3135 would extend funding support for juniper removal. It is important to continue the work not only for protection of sage grouse, but removal also assists in wildfire protection as well as water conservation since juniper growth places a significant stress on ground and surface water sources.

Language in Section 1, subsection (1), is confusing. Each district must operate within its own county. However the language states that the district "operates in at least three of the following counties." Perhaps the sponsor can speak to the interpretation of that language.

Thank you for the opportunity to support this work continuing.

Oregon Association of Conservation Districts

Jan Lee
Jan Lee, President