

RE: HB 3349 and 3350

Members of the Committee:

I urge you to support these bills as they are vital to the safety and integrity of our rural communities east of the Cascade Mountains.

My name is Bing Bingham and I've been Chairman of Ashwood Antelope Rangeland Fire Protection Association [RFPA] for many years. I'm a landowner and have been involved in the protection of my community from range fire since I moved here in 1999. During my time on our local fire lines, I've been involved in many of those dirty jobs that come with fighting range fire, plus I've taken professional quality photos on site for ODF to use in their training programs.

Last year, we were one of the few RFPAs around the state that had a light fire season. We considered ourselves very fortunate. As, I'm sure you're aware, it was not that way in many areas.

However, I have seen a major fire in the Ashwood-Antelope area. In 1996, before there were RFPAs. Two large fires came together and burned better than 120,000 acres. Some outbuildings, much fencing and cattle were lost. With the strength and resilience of community members coming together, no homes were lost.

Since that time the RFPA movement has come into existence with the help of our partnering governmental agencies and legislature. With the assistance of the equipment that has become available to us, we've not had a major fire since.

Indeed, I recall a time about 3-4 years ago where we had a dry-lightning swarm at the height of fire season in a very dry year. With the help of advance warning, pre-placement of our assets and strong equipment support through the RFPA program we were able to hold all those strikes to burning less than two acres each.

That would not have been possible without RFPA support and equipment. I urge you to support these bills and our rural communities, the savings in lives and property damage in this region are real.

Thank you for taking the time to consider this letter. I took this photo of a backburn our RFPA conducted along with partnering agencies where we saved a house 2 years ago during a wild fire in the tiny community of Willowdale along state highway #97 about 12-15 miles north of Madras.



With respect,

D. "Bing" Bingham  
Chairman, Ashwood-Antelope Rangeland Fire Protection Association