



PRESS RELEASE

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Oregon House Votes for Rural Economic Development *HB 2997 and 2998 seek to manage Western Juniper in Eastern Oregon*

SALEM – The Oregon House today approved two bills that work towards protecting native species, and creating an industry that will provide much needed jobs in rural Oregon. House Bills 2997 and 2998 aim to manage Western Juniper in Eastern Oregon, and establish an industry around Western Juniper harvesting.

The bills provide working capital, technical assistance, and training programs for small Juniper sawmills to improve their financial stability and maintain and create jobs in rural Oregon. Because Western Junipers have seen substantial overgrowth in recent years, affecting fire suppression and water management, the bills also improve the ecological well-being of the area.

“Rarely do we have the opportunity to both protect a native species as well as create an industry that will provide much needed jobs in rural communities,” said Representative Tobias Read (D-Beaverton). “These bills will do just that by managing Western Juniper in Oregon and establishing an industry around Western Juniper harvest.”

Western Juniper is a native species to Oregon, and provides benefits to wildlife, rangeland ecology, and soil retention in the high desert. However, recent overgrowth beyond its native range is threatening the health of Oregon’s rangelands. This avenue for rural economic development will both protect the regional environment in Eastern Oregon, and create much needed jobs.

The bills now move to the Senate for consideration.

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