

The Honorable Gregory V. Smith

Oregon House of Representatives

District 57

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

JUNE 25, 2025

**REPRESENTATIVE SMITH FACILITATES FUNDING FOR JEFFERSON AND WHEELER COUNTY SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICTS**

***SALEM, OR.* – Representative Gregory Smith (R-Heppner)**, Co-Vice Chair of the Joint Ways and Means Committee, voted to approve $715,000 for the Jefferson County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) and $455,000 funding allocation to the Wheeler SWCD.

The funding will be used for mitigation of Western Juniper in Jefferson and Wheeler Counties, which has been a major concern for several reasons. The biggest focus and concern Representative Smith had was wildfire prevention after seeing the area affected by Western Junipers. This issue was one of his top priorities this session.

Jefferson SWDC Program Director Adam Haarberg states, “Removing the juniper canopy in targeted watersheds has allowed what little precipitation we receive to reach the soil, making a huge impact.  The treated areas provide more forage for both wildlife and livestock.”

Haarberg added, "Since day one, Rep. Smith has helped lead this critical program through the process.  We couldn't have done it without him.   It's making a difference in our communities."

Wheeler SWDC Executive Director Cassi Newton states, “Research studies have proven that the invasive encroachment of Western Juniper on range and forest lands has significantly reduced water availability. Damaging wildlife habitat and removing viable forage available for domestic livestock.”

Smith stated, “Juniper tree mitigation is a vital step toward protecting the health of our wildlife, water supplies, and agricultural lands across Oregon. This funding will be crucial to alleviating Jefferson and Wheeler counties from the overabundance of Juniper.”

Smith was elected to serve his thirteenth term as a State Representative, making him the longest-serving member in the Oregon Legislature, as well as the 4th longest-serving State Representative in Oregon history. He holds a gavel as the Co-Chair of the Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on General Government. Representative Smith also serves as the Co-Vice Chair of the full Joint Ways and Means Committee. Additionally, he is the ranking member of the House Revenue Committee. To reach out, please visit Rep Smith's Facebook Page or send him an email at rep.gregsmith@oregonlegislature.gov.

Smith is the Republican budget leader who represents the entirety of Morrow, Gilliam, Sherman, Wheeler, and Wasco counties, as well as portions of Clackamas, Jefferson, Marion, and Umatilla Counties.

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