
**Agriculture & Natural Resources
Committee**

HB 2509

Brief Description: Authorizing the department of natural resources to use certain funds to ensure that firefighting equipment does not spread noxious weeds.

Sponsors: Representatives Short, Chase, Upthegrove, Chandler, Haler, Ericks, Warnick and Kretz.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Authorizes the Department of Natural Resources to use funds from the general fire suppression appropriation and the Landowner Contingency Forest Fire Suppression Account to clean firefighting equipment in order to minimize the spread of noxious weeds.

Hearing Date: 1/14/10

Staff: Leslie Ryan-Connelly (786-7166).

Background:

Noxious Weeds

A noxious weed is a plant that is highly destructive, competitive, or difficult to control by cultural or chemical practices. The State Noxious Weed Control Board adopts a list of noxious weeds annually and categorizes each weed by seriousness of threat to the state or a region. County noxious weed control boards adopt a county noxious weed list based, as applicable to their county, upon the state list. A county board works with landowners to eradicate or control noxious weeds on their property. State agencies are also required to control the spread of noxious weeds on land they own, lease or otherwise control.

Forest Fire Suppression

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

The Department of Natural Resources (Department) is the lead state agency responsible for fire suppression on state and private forest land. The Department also assists the federal government with fire suppression on federal and tribal land. Private landowners are obligated to provide for forest fire protection on their land. All private forest land owners are required to pay an assessment to the Department for services (forest fire protection assessment) which is deposited into the Landowner Contingency Forest Fire Suppression Account (Account). Funds from the Account may be used when a forest fire occurs as a result of a private landowner's silviculture operations.

Landowners paying the assessment are billed both at a flat rate and at an additional rate according to the size of their forest land. All landowners must pay a flat rate assessment fee of \$0.20 per parcel on the eastside of the state and \$0.40 per parcel on the westside of the state. This flat rate fee is paid by all forest land owners regardless of ownership size. Landowners who own more than 50 acres of forest land must pay the flat rate fee, plus an additional \$0.02 per each additional acre on the eastside of the state and \$0.04 per each additional acre on the westside of the state.

Funds in the Account may be used to pay for emergency fires on participating landowner's property as well as abating, isolating or reducing an extreme fire hazard on their property.

Summary of Bill:

The Department may use funds provided by the general fund appropriation for fire suppression to cover the costs associated with cleaning firefighting equipment used during a fire to minimize the spread of noxious weeds. The Department may also use funds from the Landowner Contingency Forest Fire Suppression Account to cover the costs associated with cleaning firefighting equipment when associated with a participating landowner fire.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on 1/11/10.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.