

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2762

As Reported By House Committee On:
Natural Resources

Title: An act relating to management of community and technical college forest reserve lands.

Brief Description: Ensuring that the community and technical college forest reserve is managed like other state forests for sustainable commercial forestry and potential multiple use.

Sponsors: Representatives Sehlin, Ogden, Cooke and Silver.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Natural Resources: 1/31/96, 2/2/96 [DPS].

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 14 members: Representatives Fuhrman, Chairman; Buck, Vice Chairman; Pennington, Vice Chairman; Basich, Ranking Minority Member; Regala, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Elliot; Hatfield; Jacobsen; Keiser; Sheldon; Stevens; B. Thomas; L. Thomas and Thompson.

Staff: Linda Byers (786-7129).

Background: In 1990, the Legislature appropriated \$7 million dollars to the Department of Natural Resources for the following purpose:

"The appropriation is provided solely for the purchase, including related administrative costs, of forest lands suitable for sustainable commercial forestry in areas: (a) in danger of being parceled or converted to nonforest uses; (b) where state acquisition is the most prudent means of retaining such lands in forest uses; and (c) where there is potential for multiple use of the lands consistent with RCW 79.68.050." (SSB 6407, Section 310)

The legislation went on to provide that up to 25 percent of the revenue from the lands could be deposited in the Forest Development Account to reimburse that account for expenditures made from that account for the management of these lands. The

remainder of the revenue from these lands was to be deposited in a new account created by the legislation, the Community College Forest Reserve Account. The Legislature could appropriate the moneys in this new account exclusively for the capital construction needs of the state's community colleges. The department used the appropriation to purchase 3,233 acres of land in Snohomish County.

The Legislature has not codified a management direction and structure for these forest lands, and technically the budget language quoted above expired with the end of that biennium. The department would like to invest funds on silvicultural practices on the property, and, although timber harvest is still some years away, there have been proposals for gravel extraction. Decisions about what would constitute appropriate management of the property are complicated by the lack of statutory direction.

Summary of Substitute Bill: A new section is added to statute directing the management of the community and technical college forest reserve land base. The land base is forever removed from sale; however, timber and other products may be sold or the land may be leased in the same manner and for the same purposes as authorized for the state's granted lands. The lands are to be managed for sustainable commercial forestry and for multiple use. The lands are also to be managed to provide an outdoor education and experience area for organized groups. Although the land base is reserved from sale, the department may exchange and otherwise reposition the land base in the same way that county forest board lands may be repositioned.

The department may use funds in the Forest Development Account for management of these forest lands. Up to 25 percent of the revenues from these lands will be deposited in the Forest Development Account to reimburse the account for management expenditures. The remainder of the revenues from these lands will be deposited in the re-named Community and Technical College Forest Reserve Account. The Legislature may appropriate these funds for community and technical college capital improvement needs or to acquire additional forest reserve lands.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The substitute bill further clarifies that the lands will be managed for both sustainable commercial forestry and for multiple use.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: This is a bill to fill a statutory gap dealing with the most recently created state trust lands. With expenditures needed and revenues forthcoming, the department needs statutory guidance on management of these forest lands. The language parallels the 1990 budget language. It keeps to the intent of the 1990 appropriation, which was two-fold: to keep lands in forestry that were threatened with conversion to non-forest uses, and to create a land-based trust for the community colleges. This will be a tremendous source of income for these colleges in the future. Although the colleges were a secondary consideration in acquiring this land, we appreciate this source of revenue.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Stan Biles, Department of Natural Resources; and Bill Julius, Community Colleges (both in favor).