

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1917

As Reported By House Committee On:
Natural Resources

Title: An act relating to emergency response services.

Brief Description: Requiring that department of natural resources contract with private entities for emergency response equipment, supplies, and services.

Sponsors: Representatives Pennington, Fuhrman, Thompson, Goldsmith, McMorris and Kremen.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Natural Resources: 2/21/95, 2/24/95 [DPS].

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 15 members: Representatives Fuhrman, Chairman; Buck, Vice Chairman; Pennington, Vice Chairman; Basich, Ranking Minority Member; Regala, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Beeksma; Cairnes; Elliot; G. Fisher; Jacobsen; Romero; Sheldon; Stevens; B. Thomas and Thompson.

Staff: Linda Byers (786-7129).

Background: When firefighters are working at a project site, provision must be made for their meals and other needs. The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) owns five large mobile kitchen units, one small kitchen unit, and two mobile shower trailers for use in forest fire suppression efforts. The department also contracts for use of equipment such as kitchens and showers, laundry services, chemical toilets, and refrigeration trailers.

The Forest Fire Advisory Board represents private and public forest landowners and other interested segments of the public. The board advises the department on a number of topics relating to the department's policies and expenditures on forest fire prevention and suppression.

Summary of Substitute Bill: The Legislature finds that it is frequently in the best interest of the state to utilize fire suppression equipment from private vendors. By

June 1 of each year, the Department of Natural Resources shall establish a list of fire suppression equipment such as portable showers, kitchens, and water tanks provided by the department so that the cost by unit or category can be compared to the expense of utilizing private vendors to provide this equipment. Before constructing or purchasing any equipment on this list, the department shall compare that cost with the cost of utilizing private equipment. If utilizing private equipment is more effective and efficient, the department may not construct or purchase the equipment but shall utilize equipment from the lowest responsive bidder.

An additional member is added to the Forest Fire Advisory Board to represent private contractors of fire suppression equipment, supplies, and services.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The original bill directs the department to lease equipment from private contractors; the substitute bill directs the department to utilize equipment from private vendors. The original bill addresses incidents involving wildfire on public lands; the substitute bill expands this to department-protected lands. The original bill directs the department to establish its list by July 1, 1995; the substitute bill directs the department to develop its list by June 1 of each year.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: This sets up in statute a competitive bidding process for these services, allowing the private sector to provide them. We provide mobile kitchens, showers, etc. We support the firefighters and look forward to continuing to work with DNR. This will direct DNR to consider the private sector as a first resort and not a last resort. The department supports the intent of the bill.

Testimony Against: While the department supports the intent, some of the language is troubling. The department usually contracts for the short term rather than leasing for the long term. The department also protects private forest lands rather than just public lands.

Testified: Tim Erwin, Ed Holbrook, and Ray Keever, OK's Cascade and Bishop Services (in favor); and Art Stearns, Department of Natural Resources (opposed).