

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HJM 4035

As Reported By House Committee On:

Natural Resources

Brief Description: Urging legislation facilitating forest land exchange.

Sponsors: Representatives Dyer, Butler, Schoesler, Mastin, Linville, Sehlin, Buck, Huff, Mulliken, Chandler and Koster.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Natural Resources: 2/4/98, 2/5/98 [DPS].

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 10 members: Representatives Buck, Chairman; Sump, Vice Chairman; Thompson, Vice Chairman; Regala, Ranking Minority Member; Butler, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Alexander; Anderson; Chandler; Hatfield and Pennington.

Staff: Linda Byers (786-7129).

Background: For a number of years, the U.S. Forest Service and Plum Creek Timber Company have been exploring a land exchange. The land proposed for exchange that is currently owned by Plum Creek is approximately 60,000 acres near the Interstate 90 corridor and the Alpine Lakes Wilderness Area. Much of this ownership is in a checkerboard pattern with U.S. Forest Service lands. The land proposed for exchange that is currently owned by the U.S. Forest Service is approximately 40,000 acres in three national forests: the Mount Baker-Snoqualmie, the Wenatchee, and the Gifford Pinchot.

Summary of Substitute Bill: The memorial makes a number of findings regarding the value Washington citizens place upon their natural heritage and the growing demand for recreational use of the state's natural resources, with attendant environmental impacts. The memorial discusses the proposed land exchange between Plum Creek Timber Company and the U.S. Forest Service, finding that the process has involved extensive public participation and that the exchange complements the President's Forest Plan. The memorial also finds that time is of the essence because the longer it takes to complete the exchange, the less private land will be precluded from harvest activities. The memorial then asks the United States government to promptly complete the proposed exchange.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The substitute memorial removes a provision identifying a need for a specific act of Congress to complete the exchange.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Testimony For: Plum Creek Timber Company and the U.S. Forest Service have been working on this exchange for a number of years. The ownership is in a checkerboard pattern from the original land grants. Owners work to block up their ownership. While the exchange is not perfect, it has many benefits. More unroaded lands, more old growth, and more riparian habitat will end up in public ownership. Plum Creek deferred harvest on many of these lands until the end of 1998. The U.S. Forest Service also supports this exchange.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Bob Jirsa, Plum Creek Timber Company (in favor); and Karl Denison, USDA Forest Service (neutral on memorial).