

# **HOUSE BILL ANALYSIS**

## **SB 5121**

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**Title:** An act relating to the establishment of a carbon storage program.

**Brief Description:** Establishing a carbon storage program.

**Sponsors:** Senator Hargrove.

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### **HOUSE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES**

**Meeting Date:** March 30, 1999.

**Bill Analysis Prepared by:** Josh Weiss, Counsel (786-7129)

**Background:** While scientific debate does exist, it is widely thought that global atmospheric carbon levels have risen in recent years. Some scientists argue that this increase in carbon has been caused by the burning of fossil fuels which emit carbon dioxide, and by changing land use patterns which eliminate naturally occurring carbon sinks— such as forests.

Living forests absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, storing carbon in the wood mass of the trees themselves, and facilitating the storage of carbon in forest soils. It is thought that forests can mitigate recent increases in atmospheric carbon levels.

A carbon emission trading program would provide a financial incentive for landowners to maintain long term forest production. Such a program would allow landowners to sell credits on a free market to persons who emit carbon. This could only be accomplished through a state standardized and certified program.

Several other states, including Oregon, Montana, California, Hawaii, Georgia, Maine, Minnesota, and Ohio either have implemented or are in the process of implementing carbon sequestration programs. Some countries, such as Germany, have very active carbon markets.

**Summary of Bill:** The Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development (DCTED), in cooperation with the Department of Ecology, Department of Agriculture, and Department of Natural Resources is required to evaluate other carbon storage programs. DCTED must report recommendations to the Legislature by December 1, 1999. In addition, the departments are required to review scientific programs used to implement carbon storage and analyze other programs in the state that could facilitate a carbon storage program.

The Department of Natural Resources and DCTED are required to jointly review carbon storage programs and carbon storage requirements worldwide. A report to the Legislature of this review is also required by December 1, 1999.

Involved agencies must appoint an advisory group which shall consult and offer advice regarding the requirements of the bill. The agencies are required to consider and include the input of the advisory group in all of their activities. The advisory group must consist of representatives of the timber industry, the agricultural community, the industrial business community, private landowners, and an expert on carbon sequestration from the University of Washington.

The provisions of the bill expire on December 31, 1999.

***Appropriation:*** None.

***Fiscal Note:*** Available.

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

***Rulemaking Authority:*** None.

***Passed Senate:*** 3/12/99. 48-0