

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5305

As of February 17, 1999

Title: An act relating to providing incentives for nonindustrial private forest landowners with landscape planning, technical assistance, carbon storage markets, and rural design assistance.

Brief Description: Creating the family forestry support act.

Sponsors: Senators Jacobsen, Oke, T. Sheldon, Hargrove, Rossi and Rasmussen; by request of Commissioner of Public Lands.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Natural Resources, Parks & Recreation: 2/24/99.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES, PARKS & RECREATION

Staff: Vic Moon (786-7469)

Background: Landscape management plans allow a long-term plan to substitute for the requirement to obtain numerous permits for separate forest practices and separate environmental reviews. It also includes wildlife habitat planning on forest lands. The Department of Natural Resources provides technical assistance to nonindustrial forest landowners with the present funding coming from federal sources.

Some scientists believe that the increased atmospheric carbon levels detected in recent years have been caused by the burning of fossil fuels. Living forests absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and storing carbon in wood fiber and forest soils has a positive effect on atmospheric carbon levels. A carbon emission trading program for the state of Washington could be used to allow landowners to sell credits on a free market to industries who emit high levels of carbon. Oregon, Montana, Georgia, Maine, Minnesota, Iowa, California and Hawaii are all looking at the carbon holding programs.

Conservation easements have been utilized for many years to provide an incentive for landowners to maintain agricultural forest and open space on private lands.

Summary of Bill: The Department of Natural Resources, in consultation with the Departments of Ecology and Wildlife, is authorized to select up to 20 nonindustrial landowners for the purpose of a pilot project to develop individual landscape management plans. Participation in the pilot project is voluntary on the part of the landowner. The department must approve the landscape management plan when it contains all of the required provisions of the act and when it provides better protection than current state law for the ecological functions expected to be provided by the landscape plan. Elements in the landscape plan include an assessment of habitat conditions and management strategies for various resources.

Pilot plans approved by the department allow the issuance of a single forest practices permit valid for the term of the plan and not to exceed 25 years. After a landscape management

plan has been approved, the landowners must meet with the departments to review specific forest practices. The department must provide the Forest Practices Board with an evaluation of the pilot project by December 31, 2002, and every two years thereafter.

State funding is appropriated to provide expanded technical assistance to nonindustrial forest landowners.

The Department of Natural Resources is required to report to the Legislature regarding the feasibility of establishing a statewide carbon storage trading market.

The Department of Natural Resources and the Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development are required to develop a rural design demonstration project to provide for habitat protection and maintain forest and open space lands.

The Department of Natural Resources may acquire conservation easements in riparian areas from nonindustrial forest landowners.

Appropriation: \$943,500 for the stewardship technical assistance program; \$50,000 for the carbon storage program; \$300,000 for the rural design demonstration project; \$1,500,000 for conservation easements.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 16, 1999.

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