Agriculture & Ecology Committee

SSB 6241

Brief Description: Excluding agriculturally cultivated Christmas trees from chapter 76.09 RCW.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Agriculture & International Trade (originally sponsored by Senators Rasmussen, T. Sheldon, Swecker, Hargrove and Snyder).

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

· Exempts Christmas trees that are cultivated using agricultural methods from the provisions of the Forest Practices Act.

Hearing Date: 2/22/02

Staff: Jason Callahan (786-7117).

Background:

The Forest Practices Act defines "forest lands" as all lands capable of supporting a merchantable stand of timber that is not being actively used in a way that is incompatible with growing timber. Any landowner growing "forest trees" on forest lands must comply with the provisions of the Forest Practices Act and its associated rules. Those rules consider what effects various forest practices have on fish, wildlife and water quality.

"Forest trees" includes Christmas trees; therefore, Christmas trees are included under the Forest Practices Act and associated rules. For example, the harvest and shearing of Christmas trees are a Class I forest practice and do not require notification to the Department of Natural Resources. Aerial pesticide applications are considered as a Class IV forest practice and require approval by the Department of Natural Resources.

"Agricultural methods" is defined as cultivation of trees that are grown on land prepared by intensive cultivation and tilling, such as irrigating, plowing, or turning over the soil, and on which all unwanted plant growth is controlled continuously for the exclusive purpose of raising trees such as Christmas trees and short-rotation hardwoods.

Summary of Bill:

Christmas trees that are cultivated using agricultural methods are exempt from the provisions of the Forest Practices Act.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not Requested.

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