

HB 1665 - DIGEST

Finds that: (1) The total acreage of forest land owned and managed by small forest landowners is diminishing at an alarming rate;

(2) The loss of forest land has a direct negative impact on fish, wildlife, water quality, water resources, and the ecology of the state's watersheds and near shore marine environments;

(3) Current forest practices regulations have resulted in an unanticipated disproportionate economic impact on small forest landowners; and

(4) The forest and fish law, adopted in 1999, envisioned a path by which small forest landowners could satisfy environmental protections by implementing forest practices that differ from the default forest practices rules. Lewis county, together with a nonprofit partner, has developed an alternate approach for the small forest landowners living within its jurisdiction to satisfy the environmental safeguards of the current forest practices rules in a document entitled the "Family Forest Habitat Conservation Plan." This plan details alternate harvest restrictions that are specifically tailored to the unique local geography of Lewis county and are designed to be the equivalent of the environmental protections of the default forest practices rules while providing a lower administrative burden to small forest landowners.

Declares an intent to reaffirm the legislature's commitment to assisting small forest landowners to keep their land in active working forestry and to recognize that the alternate harvest restrictions developed by Lewis county in the family forest habitat conservation plan represents the commitment to science and to the protection of aquatic life originally envisioned in alternate harvest restrictions.