
**Rural Development, Agriculture, &
Natural Resources Committee**

HB 1946

Brief Description: Concerning community forests.

Sponsors: Representatives Chapman, Maycumber, Fitzgibbon, Steele and Ramos.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Creates the Community Forest Grant Program and Community Forestland Account.

Hearing Date: 2/13/19

Staff: Rebecca Lewis (786-7339).

Background:

Community Forest Trust.

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) manages the Community Forest Trust (CFT), created in 2011. The CFT is a discrete category of nonfiduciary trust lands held by the DNR and actively managed to generate financial support for the CFT and to sustain working forest conservation objectives. The DNR may acquire parcels for the CFT through purchase, gift, donation, grant, transfer, or other means other than eminent domain. If state trust lands are transferred into the CFT, then the value of that transfer must be provided to the beneficiaries of the trust. Designated in 2013, the Teanaway Community Forest was the first community forest in Washington.

Prior to acquiring land for a CFT, the DNR must obtain a commitment from the local community to preserve the land as a working forest. This community commitment must be demonstrated by a reimbursable financial contribution of at least 50 percent of the difference between the parcel's fair market value and its timber value. Each parcel added to the CFT must be accompanied by a management plan developed in cooperation with a local advisory committee. The DNR must

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submit a prioritized list of parcels suitable for transfer into the CFT by November 1 of each even-numbered year.

Community Forest Program Development.

In the 2017-19 Supplemental Capital Budget, the Legislature directed the DNR to consult with nonprofit stakeholders, counties, municipalities, tribes, and small and large private forest landowners, to develop a nonstate-owned community forest project list and a process to prioritize and recommend projects to the Legislature. The list was due November 1, 2018, and the DNR was directed to further prioritize a list of community forest projects to submit to the Legislature as required under the CFT.

The project list was required to include projects solicited from both eastern and western Washington that have demonstrable community support. An appropriation was provided for the DNR to perform an economic and ownership modeling analysis using at least one project proposed through the DNR's Rural Communities Partnership Initiative as a case study.

Summary of Bill:

Community Forest Program.

The Community Forest Grant Program (Grant Program) and Community Forestland Account (Account) are created. The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is responsible for administration of both the Grant Program and Account, and may retain no more than 15 percent of the Account funds for administration of the Grant Program.

Grant Program funds must be used for acquisition, development, and restoration activities related to a community forest project. "Project sponsors," defined as certain state and local agencies, tribes, and nonprofit nature conservancies, may apply for Account funds, and must provide a minimum of 15 percent matching funds. To the extent possible, awarded funds must be used consistent with applicable local, state, or federal land use or management plans. Property or property interests acquired with Account funds may not be converted to a use other than the use for which funds were originally approved without prior approval from the DNR.

Project sponsors must coordinate with local county or city officials on a variety of factors that may include project purpose and scope, estimated project cost, public access, and plans for project management and maintenance.

Before November 1 of each year, the DNR must submit to the Governor a prioritized list of projects proposed to be funded from the Account as a part of the Grant Program. The Governor may remove projects from the list, and must subsequently submit the amended list as part of the Governor's capital budget request to the Legislature.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.