

FINAL BILL REPORT

SHB 1208

C 131 L 91
Synopsis As Enacted

Brief Description: Authorizing an interstate forest fire suppression compact.

By House Committee on Human Services (originally sponsored by Representatives Belcher, Hargrove, Jones, Beck, Winsley, Nealey, R. King and Haugen; by request of Department of Corrections).

House Committee on Human Services
Senate Committee on Law & Justice

Background: The Department of Corrections does not have the authority to transport any offender in its custody across the state boundary without an approved extrication. No interstate agreements currently exist that allow other adjoining states to transport their inmates into Washington without an extradition.

These restrictions pose some difficulties for the Department of Corrections. Unexpected road closures create delays in transporting inmates, even though other out-of-state routes are accessible and available, and could save valuable time if used. Inmate fire fighting crews cannot be used in other adjoining states, and state boundaries cannot be crossed to access a very remote in-state forest fire.

The department has a forest fire suppression training program for inmates. The program has approximately 430 inmates available to work on fire crews. Washington, Oregon, and Idaho each rely on prison inmates to provide fire fighting assistance within their respective states in the event they are called upon. Forest fires in Washington, Oregon, and Idaho federal and state lands are a common occurrence. Some forest fires are intense enough to require fire fighting personnel beyond the states' existing capabilities. Inmate forest fire suppression crews, however, do not work on forest fires outside their respective states or on federal lands. Budget cutbacks in federal fire suppression have increased the potential need to rely on local and regional fire suppression crews.

Summary: The state of Washington is allowed to enter into an Interstate Forest Fire Suppression Compact with the states of Idaho and Oregon. The compact is valid when any

two of the three states of Washington, Idaho, and Oregon have enacted the compact into law. The compact will remain binding until any one of the states sends written notice of its intent to withdraw.

The compact gives the Department of Corrections authority to transport offenders to the party states for fire suppression efforts and in emergency situations due to weather or road conditions.

The Department of Corrections must appoint a liaison to coordinate and develop the inmate fire suppression units. Inmates working on forest fire suppression in other states will be under the jurisdiction of the sending state, unless the inmate has escaped. If the inmate has escaped, he/she will be under the jurisdiction of both the sending state and the receiving state. Inmates suspected of a criminal offense while working in another state, will be returned to the sending state only if they are discharged from prosecution or other form of proceeding, imprisonment, or detention from the offense.

The inmate forest fire crews may be a Class I Correctional Industries program when fighting forest fires on federal lands. This designation permits the Department of Corrections to contract with the federal government to fight fires on federal land with state inmate forest fire suppression crews.

Votes on Final Passage:

House	98	0
Senate	44	1

Effective: July 28, 1991