

6144-S2

Sponsor(s): Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Morton and Deccio)

Brief Description: Developing a statewide plan to address forest health.

SB 6144-S2 - DIGEST

(DIGEST AS ENACTED)

Finds that Washington faces serious forest health problems where forests are overcrowded or trees are infested with or susceptible to insects, diseases, wind, ice storms, and fire. The causes and contributions to these susceptible conditions include fire suppression, past timber harvesting and silvicultural practices, and the amplified risks that occur when the urban interface penetrates forest land.

Finds that forest health problems may exist on forest land regardless of ownership, and the state should explore all possible avenues for working in collaboration with the federal government to address common health deficiencies.

Finds that healthy forests benefit not only the economic interests that rely on forest products but also provide environmental benefits, such as improved water quality and habitat for fish and wildlife.

Designates the commissioner of public lands as the state of Washington's lead for all forest health issues.

Requires the commissioner of public lands to report to the chairs of the appropriate standing committees of the legislature every year on progress under this act, including the identification, if deemed appropriate by the commissioner, of any needed statutory changes, policy issues, or funding needs.

Directs the commissioner of public lands to develop a statewide plan for increasing forest resistance and resilience to forest insects, disease, wind, and fire in Washington by December 30, 2004. In developing the statewide plan, the commissioner shall work with and consult the work group created in this act.

Declares an intent to ensure, to the extent feasible given all applicable trust responsibilities, that trust beneficiaries receive long-term income from timber lands through improved forest conditions and by reducing the threat of forest fire to state trust forest lands.

Provides that, in order to implement the intent of this act, the department may initiate contract harvesting timber sales, or other silvicultural treatments when appropriate, in specific areas of state trust forest land where the department has identified forest health deficiencies as enumerated in this act. All harvesting or silvicultural treatments applied under this act must be tailored to improve the health of the specific stand, must be consistent with any applicable state forest plans and other management agreements, and must comply with all applicable state and federal laws and regulations regarding the harvest of timber by the department of natural resources.

