

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1983

As Reported by House Committee On:
Rural Development, Agriculture, & Natural Resources

Title: An act relating to natural resource management activities.

Brief Description: Concerning natural resource management activities.

Sponsors: Representatives Maycumber, Kretz and Walsh.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Rural Development, Agriculture, & Natural Resources: 2/19/19, 2/22/19 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Authorizes the Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) to use the best available land management techniques to manage acquired lands, and requires the Department to develop mitigation actions where appropriate.
- Allows the Department to use specific land management techniques without preparing an Environmental Impact Statement.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON RURAL DEVELOPMENT, AGRICULTURE, & NATURAL RESOURCES

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 13 members: Representatives Blake, Chair; Shewmake, Vice Chair; Dent, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Chapman, Dye, Fitzgibbon, Kretz, Lekanoff, Orcutt, Pettigrew, Schmick, Springer and Walsh.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 1 member: Representative Ramos.

Staff: Rebecca Lewis (786-7339).

Background:

Land Management by the Department of Fish and Wildlife.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

As a part of its mandate to protect and preserve the state's fish and wildlife resources while providing sustainable recreational and commercial opportunities, the Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) may acquire and manage state lands. The Department currently owns or manages about 1 million acres in 33 wildlife areas, along with 700 public water-access sites.

State Environmental Policy Act.

The State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) establishes a review process for state and local governments to evaluate environmental impacts from project permits and other government decisions. The SEPA process involves the completion of an environmental checklist by a lead agency and coordination with other governments and agencies as applicable. Some projects may require the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Information collected during the SEPA process may be used to adjust project proposals to reduce potential environmental impacts. Certain actions are exempt from the SEPA requirements to submit an environmental checklist or to prepare an EIS.

Summary of Bill:

The Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) may manage its acquired lands using the best available land management techniques. These techniques include:

- licenses or approvals to move firewood or for brush picking;
- periodic application of Department of Agriculture-approved chemicals by licensed personnel;
- issuance of right-of-way easements and use permits to use existing roads in nonresidential areas; and
- issuance of grazing leases regardless of whether the land has been actively grazed.

Land management activities under this authority are exempt from the requirement to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement under the SEPA, and the Department has a duty to develop mitigation actions where appropriate.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) This bill passed the House last year 98-0, but did not make it through the whole process. Catastrophic wildfires in 2015 reached temperatures in certain areas where some vegetation will not grow back for 100 years. Departments did do some natural fuel

mitigation in some places, and went through the 18-month Environmental Impact Statement process. As a result of the mitigation, a species of butterfly was saved. This bill provides an opportunity for the Department of Fish and Wildlife to protect habitat from some impacts of catastrophic wildfire during the spring season before wildfires start.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Maycumber, prime sponsor.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.