

HOUSE BILL REPORT

EHB 2166

As Passed House:
February 19, 2020

Title: An act relating to creating special license plates that support working forests.

Brief Description: Creating special license plates that support working forests.

Sponsors: Representatives Orcutt, Lovick, Chapman, Barkis, Blake and Kretz.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Transportation: 2/6/20, 2/10/20 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/19/20, 95-3.

Brief Summary of Engrossed Bill

- Creates the Working Forest special license plate.
- Establishes original and renewal fees for the special license plate.
- Provides funds to the Washington Tree Farm Program to support small forest landowners practicing sustainable forestry.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 30 members: Representatives Fey, Chair; Wylie, 1st Vice Chair; Slatter, 2nd Vice Chair; Valdez, 2nd Vice Chair; Barkis, Ranking Minority Member; Walsh, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Young, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Boehnke, Chambers, Chapman, Dent, Doglio, Duerr, Entenman, Eslick, Goehner, Gregerson, Irwin, Kloba, Lovick, McCaslin, Mead, Orcutt, Ortiz-Self, Paul, Ramos, Riccelli, Shewmake, Van Werven and Volz.

Staff: Christine Thomas (786-7142).

Background:

Special License Plates.

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.

The Department of Licensing (DOL) issues special vehicle license plates that may be used in lieu of standard plates. An organization seeking to sponsor a special license plate must be a nonprofit organization, a professional sports franchise working in conjunction with a nonprofit organization, or a government agency. The sponsoring organization may choose one of two ways of creating a special license plate.

Application Process and Legislation. In this method, a sponsoring organization submits an application to the DOL prior to pursuing legislation. The application packet must include the design of the special license plate, proof of 3,500 signatures in support of the special license plate, and the start-up fee of \$6,300. After the DOL approves the application, the sponsoring organization must pursue legislation to create the special license plate.

Legislation Without the Department of Licensing's Review. In this method, a sponsoring organization pursues legislation without applying to the DOL first. Once the bill is enacted, the sponsoring organization must provide the design of the special license plate and the start-up fee of \$6,300 to the DOL within 30 days.

In both methods, if the sponsoring organization can prove that they are unable to provide the start-up fee up front, then revenues from the sale of the special license plate will be used to pay this fee. On an annual basis, the sponsoring organization must submit a financial report to the DOL detailing actual revenues from the sale of the special license plate. The DOL compiles these reports and presents them to the transportation committees of the Legislature.

The DOL collects special license plate fees and, for administrative expenses, retains an amount not to exceed \$12 for new plate issuance and \$2 for renewal of the plate. The State Treasurer then deposits the remaining proceeds into the Motor Vehicle Account until the DOL determines that the start-up fee of \$6,300 is paid. Once the start-up fee is paid, the State Treasurer credits the remaining special license plate proceeds into an account specified for the sponsoring organization.

Working Forests and the Washington Tree Farm Program.

According to the National Alliance of Forest Owners, "working forests" are forestlands carefully managed to steadily and renewably supply wood for lumber, energy, paper and packaging, and other items that consumers use every day. Approximately 360 million acres of the working forests in the United States are on private land, owned by individuals, families, small and large businesses, and other investors. Approximately 9.2 million acres of forestlands in Washington are privately owned.

The Washington Tree Farm Program is a nonprofit organization that helps forestland owners sustainably manage private forestlands across Washington. The Washington Tree Farm is a voluntary certification program.

Summary of Engrossed Bill:

The Working Forest special license plate is created to support working forests. In addition to all fees and taxes required to be paid upon application for a vehicle registration, a fee of \$40 is charged for the original issuance of a Working Forest special license plate, and a \$30 fee is charged for the renewal of the plate. Revenue from the fees collected for the special license

plates will provide funds to the Washington Tree Farm Program to support small forest landowners practicing sustainable forestry.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect on October 1, 2021.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) Working forest farmers take forestlands in poor shape and rehabilitate them. Working forests should not be converted or covered with asphalt. This bill celebrates working forests. Small forest owners and working forests support local economies, families, and the environment. The Washington Tree Farm Program is a dedicated group that provides certification and verification of a plan for how working forest land will be managed. Not having a plan means that outcomes are uncertain. Data shows that having a plan means a working forest that sends wood through the supply chain will not become land for housing or become clear cut. The Washington Tree Farm Program brings together tree farmers, foresters, and natural resource experts to collaborate and provide tools for sustainable forestry practices. The funds from this special license plate will provide more tools for sustainable forestry practices. The special license plate celebrates tree farm owners who love their land and their trees.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Orcutt, prime sponsor; Jason Callahan, Washington Forest Protection Association; Tammie Perreault and Bob Obedzinski, Washington Tree Farm Program; and Heather Hansen, Hansen Family Tree Farm.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.