

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HJM 4000

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

Brief Description: Supporting the continued research, development, production, and application of biochar from our forests and agricultural lands.

Sponsors: Representatives Shea, Fitzgibbon, Dent, Goodman, Eslick, Sells, Stokesbary, Tharinger, DeBolt, Fey, Walsh, Ryu, Maycumber, Blake, Kretz, Doglio, Kloba, Irwin and Young.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Rural Development, Agriculture, & Natural Resources: 1/16/19, 1/29/19 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Affirms the Legislature's support for biochar research, including research into the production of biochar and research into applications for biochar.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON RURAL DEVELOPMENT, AGRICULTURE, & NATURAL RESOURCES

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 14 members: Representatives Blake, Chair; Shewmake, Vice Chair; Chandler, Ranking Minority Member; Dent, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Chapman, Dye, Fitzgibbon, Kretz, Lekanoff, Orcutt, Pettigrew, Ramos, Schmick and Walsh.

Staff: Robert Hatfield (786-7117).

Background:

Biochar is a fine-grained charcoal left behind after pyrolysis of crop residues, livestock manures, or other organic materials. Pyrolysis is the high-temperature processing of organic materials in the absence of oxygen.

Biochar is used in multiple applications, including as a soil amendment and in sewage and wastewater treatment. Researchers have found that biochar applied to wet soils can decrease

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the production of methane and nitrous oxide. Other research has shown that biochar can be useful for restoring degraded soils because of its ability to bind to heavy metals.

Summary of Bill:

The House Joint Memorial affirms the Legislature's support for the biochar research efforts of the United States Forest Service, the Agricultural Research Service of the United States Department of Agriculture, Washington State University, the Department of Ecology, and other institutions. These research efforts include research to produce biochar from the removal of wildfire fuel loads, from waste agricultural products, and from other waste biomass destined for landfills or combustion.

The House Joint Memorial also affirms the Legislature's support for the research of biochar as an animal feed, remediation tool, landscaping material, and soil amendment for forest and agricultural lands.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) Biochar can help with forest fires, can improve soil quality, and can improve long-term carbon sequestration. The House Joint Memorial recognizes the great work that Washington State University and the Department of Ecology have done in the area of biochar. Thanks to their work, they have positioned Washington to be a leader in the biochar field. There are two manufacturers of biochar in the state. Biochar also highlights the opportunity for rural communities to contribute to sequestration.

There is bipartisan support for further biochar research. Recycling Washington's wood and agricultural waste helps address some of the state's most pressing problems. Biochar can help to offset forest thinning costs, sequester carbon, and mitigate some of the effects of the lack of rain during summer months. Biochar will also create needed new jobs in rural communities.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Raelene Gold, League of Women Voters of Washington; and Greg Rock, Carbon Washington.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.