

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5330

As of February 5, 2019

Title: An act relating to analyzing state regulatory impact on small forest landowners.

Brief Description: Analyzing state regulatory impact on small forest landowners.

Sponsors: Senators Braun, Van De Wege, Takko, Short, Becker, Rivers, Wagoner and Warnick.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Agriculture, Water, Natural Resources & Parks: 1/31/19.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Establishes a legislative work group to analyze the state regulatory impact on small forest landowners and make recommendations to improve the retention of working forestland held by small forest landowners.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, WATER, NATURAL RESOURCES & PARKS

Staff: Jeff Olsen (786-7428)

Background: The Forest and Fish Report was issued in 1999 and contained recommendations for developing and implementing rules and programs designed to improve and protect riparian habitat on non-federal forest lands in Washington. The rules proposed in the report were designed to provide compliance with the federal Endangered Species Act, restore and maintain minimum riparian habitat to support a harvestable supply of fish, meet Clean Water Act standards, and keep the timber industry economically viable.

The Legislature adopted the Forests and Fish Law in response to the Forest and Fish Report. The law directed the Forest Practices Board (Board) to adopt emergency rules implementing the recommendations of the Forest and Fish Report. Among other things, the Forests and Fish Law created the Small Forest Landowner's Office (SFLO) in the Department of Natural Resources, the Forestry Riparian Easement Program, and directed the developing alternate management plans or harvest restrictions.

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.

Summary of Bill: A legislative work group is created to analyze the state regulatory impact on small forest landowners. The work group is comprised of four members, one each from the two largest caucuses of the House of Representatives and Senate. The work group may contract with outside entities such as the University of Washington or the Washington State Institute for Public Policy.

The work group must address, at a minimum, whether the number of small forest landowners has increased or decreased, whether the acreage held by small forest landowners has increased or decreased, and if certain forest lands previously held by small forest landowners have been converted to other uses. The work group must also review the effectiveness of the SFLO, the forest riparian easement program, and the use of alternate harvest management plans. The work group must report its findings to the appropriate committees of the Legislature by November 1, 2019. In the report, the work group must include recommendations to improve retention of working forestland held by small forest landowners.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: Yes.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: It has been 20 years since the passage of the Forest and Fish Act, and it is time to take a look at the impact on small forest landowners. The Small Forest Landowner Office is required to provide a report to the Legislature every four years including a trend analysis. It is time to update information regarding small forest landowners. The DNR regulates forest practices, so may not be the best option for performing the analysis. The University of Washington should update work they have done back in 2007. The assistance for small forest landowners has had limited success, mostly due to lack of funding. Small forest landowners hold 50 percent of the private forestlands in the state, and the DNR is supportive of looking at what is impacting small forest landowners and how to maintain working forests.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator John Braun, Prime Sponsor; Elaine Oneil, Executive Director, Washington Farm Forestry Association; Ken Miller, Former President, Washington Farm Forestry Association; Victor Musselman, President, Washington Farm Forestry Association; Stephen Bernath, Deputy for Forest Practices, DNR.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.