

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1812

*As Reported By House Committee on:
Natural Resources & Parks*

Title: An act relating to stewardship assistance for owners of nonindustrial forests and woodlands.

Brief Description: Adopting the woodland stewardship assistance act.

Sponsor(s): Representatives Riley, Brumsickle, Sheldon, Rasmussen and Cooper.

Brief History:

Reported by House Committee on:
Natural Resources & Parks, February 27, 1991, DP.

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
NATURAL RESOURCES & PARKS**

Majority Report: *Do pass.* Signed by 11 members: Representatives Belcher, Chair; Scott, Vice Chair; Beck, Ranking Minority Member; Brumsickle, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Dellwo; Fraser; Hargrove; Morton; Riley; Sheldon; and Wynne.

Staff: Randy Acker (786-7129).

Background: In Washington, 40,000 non-industrial woodland owners own about 4.4 million acres or 25 percent of the state's commercial forest land. These lands are estimated to contain about 35.8 billion board feet of timber. Much of this land is understocked and unmanaged. The U.S. Forest Service has estimated that over one million acres of Washington's private non-industrial woodlands currently need treatment or will require treatment by the end of the decade.

Currently there is no coordinated state program to encourage landowners to manage their forest lands for the full variety of forest resources and benefits that these lands are capable of producing. The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) operates a limited service forestry program that provides technical forestry assistance and management planning. The traditional orientation of this program has been maximum fiber production. There is no statutory direction to DNR regarding the operation of such a program.

A recent survey of non-industrial private land owners shows that a high percentage of these land owners place a higher priority on various conservation purposes than they do on production of fiber and income from timber sales. The result is that a lot of these lands are not actively managed. In many situations, with the right information and planning, it is possible to enhance the primary goals of landowners, and simultaneously harvest timber.

Summary of Bill: A new chapter in law is created dealing with stewardship assistance for owners of nonindustrial forests and woodlands.

The purpose of the chapter is to: (a) promote the coordination and delivery of services to non-industrial forest and woodland owners; and (b) facilitate the production of forest products, enhancement of wildlife and fisheries, protection of streams and wetlands, culturing of special plants, availability of recreation opportunities and the maintenance of scenic beauty though meeting the landowner's objectives.

The Department of Natural Resources is authorized to establish and maintain a non-industrial forest and woodland owner assistance program. The department may provide technical assistance to landowners and assist cooperating organizations in providing similar assistance. The department is authorized to provide financial assistance, loan or rent surplus equipment, and appoint a stewardship advisory committee to assist in establishing and operating this program.

The department is authorized to receive and disperse federal monies, as well as donations from public and private sources.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 13, 1991.

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

Testimony For: Small woodlots are feeling the pressure from growth. Many woodlot owners would like to do more with their lands but there is a lack of knowledge and understanding of where to go for assistance. This bill will help to create an effective and coordinated program of assistance that can respond to interest in wise use of forest resources.

Testimony Against: None.

Witnesses: Laura Eckert, Department of Natural Resources; Diane Ellison, private citizen; Judy Turpin, Washington Environmental Council; Norm Hutson, Washington Farm Forestry Association; Nels Hanson, Washington Farm Forestry Association; and Charles Krebs, U.S. Forest service.