

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SB 5264

As Passed Legislature

Title: An act relating to community and urban forestry.

Brief Description: Authorizing the department of natural resources to establish a program in community and urban forestry.

Sponsor(s): Senators Oke, Bailey, Rinehart, Stratton and Bauer.

Brief History:

Reported by House Committee on:

Natural Resources & Parks, April 4, 1991, DPA;

Passed House, April 18, 1991, 97-0;

Passed Legislature, 97-0.

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
NATURAL RESOURCES & PARKS**

Majority Report: *Do pass as amended.* 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: The Department of Natural Resources has operated a very limited program in community and urban forestry based on a \$35,000 grant from the U.S. Forest Service. There currently is no statutory direction to the department to run such a program nor has there been any state funding to support efforts in this area. Despite the limited nature of the program, cities and towns have increasingly sought technical assistance from the department as they have worked to retain and enhance urban and community forests.

Washington State's federal grant for community forestry will increase to \$220,000 this year as a result of the recently enacted "America The Beautiful" Program. As a condition of the federal grant, the State must develop a community forestry program that includes an advisory council, a volunteer component, a program coordinator, an assessment of community forestry tree resources, and within three years

provide state matching grants. HB 1111 is a request of the Department of Natural Resources in order to meet these conditions of the grant.

Summary of Bill: A new chapter in law is created establishing the importance of trees in community and urban environments and declaring the need for assistance in establishing, retaining and enhancing community and urban forests.

The Department of Natural Resources is authorized to establish a program in community and urban forestry. The department may advise, encourage, and assist municipalities, counties, and other entities in promoting community and urban forestry. The department may appoint an advisory committee and it may assist municipal and county tree maintenance programs through loans of surplus equipment.

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

Fiscal Note: Requested March 29, 1991.

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

Testimony For: This bill will help the Department of Natural Resources more effectively handle the federal funds that will be coming to the state for community and urban forestry and allow the department to be more responsive to requests for assistance from local governments. The bill will enhance education efforts related to community forests and will help to ensure that trees are planted where the majority of the state's population lives.

Testimony Against: None.

Witnesses: Laura Eckert, Department of Natural Resources; and Carl Dennison, U.S. Forest Service.