

# FINAL BILL REPORT

## SHB 1483

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C 151 L 95

Synopsis as Enacted

**Brief Description:** Revising provisions on the prevention and suppression of forest wild fires.

**Sponsors:** House Committee on Natural Resources (originally sponsored by Representatives Pennington, Elliot, Stevens, Huff, Mielke, Johnson, L. Thomas, McMahan and Sheahan).

**House Committee on Natural Resources**  
**Senate Committee on Natural Resources**

**Background:** Current law assigns firefighting responsibilities both to the Department of Natural Resources and to local entities. The department's primary mission is to protect forest land and suppress forest fires. A primary mission of rural fire districts and municipal fire departments is to protect improved property and suppress structural fires. This distinction, however, grows more difficult to implement in practice as more people build residences in the forest and forest fires threaten these structures.

The department's firefighting priorities are to first save human lives, then real property, then natural resources.

**Summary:** A new section reiterates current law with regard to the respective firefighting missions of the department and of rural fire districts and municipal fire departments. The department's firefighting priorities are changed such that protecting forest resources and suppressing forest wild fires is second only to saving lives. The most effective way to protect structures is for the department to focus its efforts and resources on aggressively suppressing forest wild fires.

The Legislature also acknowledges the natural role of fire in forest ecosystems and finds it to be in the public interest to use fire under controlled conditions to prevent wild fires by maintaining healthy forests and eliminating sources of fuel.

**Votes on Final Passage:**

House	96 0
Senate	48 0

**Effective:** July 23, 1995