

VETO MESSAGE ON SB 5325-S

May 19, 1997

To the Honorable President and Members,
The Senate of the State of Washington
Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am returning herewith, without my approval, Substitute Senate Bill No. 5325 entitled:

"AN ACT Relating to transfer of state forest lands back to counties;"

Substitute Senate Bill No. 5325 would allow all counties but King to file applications with the Board of Natural Resources for the transfer of Forest Board Transfer lands to the requesting counties. Upon receiving the application, the Board would be required to transfer the lands. The bill specifies the conditions regarding how such lands are to be managed by those counties receiving them.

In authorizing a shift in management from the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to the requesting counties, this bill would represent a fundamental policy change at the expense of non-county beneficiaries of state trust lands.

It has been a long-standing policy of the DNR to consolidate state forest lands to obtain economies of scale. By allowing counties to take over these lands, SSB 5325 would make it more expensive to manage the remaining state trust lands and would result in less revenue for other trust beneficiaries including the common schools. In addition, the bill would significantly reduce the DNR's fire fighting capability, imposing extra costs on local governments and risks to local communities.

This bill would not permit the inclusion of the lands transferred to counties in the recently signed Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP), without the agreement of the counties. To remove major portions of land from the state trust management system would place additional harvest restrictions on the remaining lands and reduce revenues for their beneficiaries.

For these reasons, I have vetoed Substitute Senate Bill No. 5325 in its entirety.

Respectfully submitted,
Gary Locke
Governor