

SENATE BILL REPORT

SSB 5144

As Passed Senate, March 17, 2003

Title: An act relating to protecting forest health.

Brief Description: Protecting forest land from exotic forest insects or diseases.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Natural Resources, Energy & Water (originally sponsored by Senators Morton and Oke).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Natural Resources, Energy & Water: 1/24/03, 2/27/03 [DPS].
Passed Senate: 3/17/03, 49-0.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES, ENERGY & WATER

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5144 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Morton, Chair; Hewitt, Vice Chair; Doumit, Hale, Hargrove, Honeyford, Oke and Regala.

Staff: Vic Moon (786-7469)

Background: Numerous studies indicate that the health of Washington forests is declining, as is the health of forests in other western states. An increasing number of forest stands are becoming susceptible to insect and disease outbreaks. There is an increasing concern about present management practices and the growing risk of exotic and deleterious insects, diseases and plants.

Under present law, the Department of Agriculture has the responsibility concerning exotic insects and diseases, and the Department of Natural Resources has authority over most forest health issues.

Summary of Bill: RCW 76.06, regarding forest insect and disease control, is reorganized to provide that the Department of Natural Resources, under the control of the Commissioner of Public Lands, directs the control or eradication of exotic insects and diseases. A forest practices permit is not required for this activity.

RCW 76.09, which is the Forest Practices Act, is revised to specify that a forest practices permit is not required when the Department of Agriculture operates under its authority to control exotic pests or when the Department of Natural Resources seeks to control exotic forest pests in a forest health emergency. The provisions for a forest health emergency are specified in the proposal.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: A coordinated approach to control of forest insects and disease is needed so that the Department of Agriculture can act within the framework of the Forest Practices Act along with the Department of Natural Resources. A speedy process is needed to deal with invasive species to stop them before they spread.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: PRO: Pat McElroy, Department of Natural Resources; Bill Garvin, Washington Forest Protection Association.

House Amendment(s): Language is added requesting the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Natural Resources to coordinate their responses to Sudden Oak Death Syndrome.