
SENATE BILL 6581

State of Washington

58th Legislature

2004 Regular Session

By Senator Hargrove

Read first time 01/26/2004. Referred to Committee on Natural Resources, Energy & Water.

1 AN ACT Relating to funding for forest fire protection; and amending
2 RCW 76.04.610.

3 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

4 **Sec. 1.** RCW 76.04.610 and 2001 c 279 s 2 are each amended to read
5 as follows:

6 (1) If any owner of forest land within a forest protection zone
7 neglects or fails to provide adequate fire protection as required by
8 RCW 76.04.600, the department shall provide such protection and shall
9 annually impose the following assessments on each parcel of such land:
10 (a) A flat fee assessment of fourteen dollars and fifty cents; and (b)
11 twenty-five cents on each acre exceeding fifty acres. Assessors may,
12 at their option, collect the assessment on tax exempt lands. If the
13 assessor elects not to collect the assessment, the department may bill
14 the landowner directly.

15 (2) An owner who has paid assessments on two or more parcels, each
16 containing fewer than fifty acres and each within the same county, may
17 obtain the following refund:

18 (a) If all the parcels together contain less than fifty acres, then
19 the refund is equal to the flat fee assessments paid, reduced by the

1 total of (i) fourteen dollars and (ii) the total of the amounts
2 retained by the county from such assessments under subsection (5) of
3 this section.

4 (b) If all the parcels together contain fifty or more acres, then
5 the refund is equal to the flat fee assessments paid, reduced by the
6 total of (i) fourteen dollars, (ii) twenty-five cents for each acre
7 exceeding fifty acres, and (iii) the total of the amounts retained by
8 the county from such assessments under subsection (5) of this section.

9 Applications for refunds shall be submitted to the department on a
10 form prescribed by the department and in the same year in which the
11 assessments were paid. The department may not provide refunds to
12 applicants who do not provide verification that all assessments and
13 property taxes on the property have been paid. Applications may be
14 made by mail.

15 In addition to the procedures under this subsection, property
16 owners with multiple parcels in a single county who qualify for a
17 refund under this section may apply to the department on an application
18 listing all the parcels owned in order to have the assessment computed
19 on all parcels but billed to a single parcel. Property owners with the
20 following number of parcels may apply to the department in the year
21 indicated:

22	Year	Number of Parcels
23	2002	10 or more parcels
24	2003	8 or more parcels
25	2004	6 or more parcels
26	((2005	4 or more parcels
27	2006 and thereafter	2 or more parcels))

28 The department must compute the correct assessment and allocate one
29 parcel in the county to use to collect the assessment. The county must
30 then bill the forest fire protection assessment on that one allocated
31 identified parcel. The landowner is responsible for notifying the
32 department of any changes in parcel ownership.

33 (3) Beginning January 1, 1991, under the administration and at the
34 discretion of the department up to two hundred thousand dollars per
35 year of this assessment shall be used in support of those rural fire
36 districts assisting the department in fire protection services on
37 forest lands.

1 (4) For the purpose of this chapter, the department may divide the
2 forest lands of the state, or any part thereof, into districts, for
3 fire protection and assessment purposes, may classify lands according
4 to the character of timber prevailing, and the fire hazard existing,
5 and place unprotected lands under the administration of the proper
6 district. Amounts paid or contracted to be paid by the department for
7 protection of forest lands from funds at its disposal shall be a lien
8 upon the property protected, unless reimbursed by the owner within ten
9 days after October 1st of the year in which they were incurred. The
10 department shall be prepared to make statement thereof, upon request,
11 to a forest owner whose own protection has not been previously approved
12 as to its adequacy, the department shall report the same to the
13 assessor of the county in which the property is situated. The assessor
14 shall extend the amounts upon the tax rolls covering the property, and
15 upon authorization from the department shall levy the forest protection
16 assessment against the amounts of unimproved land as shown in each
17 ownership on the county assessor's records. The assessor may then
18 segregate on the records to provide that the improved land and
19 improvements thereon carry the millage levy designed to support the
20 rural fire protection districts as provided for in RCW 52.16.170.

21 (5) The amounts assessed shall be collected at the time, in the
22 same manner, by the same procedure, and with the same penalties
23 attached that general state and county taxes on the same property are
24 collected, except that errors in assessments may be corrected at any
25 time by the department certifying them to the treasurer of the county
26 in which the land involved is situated. Assessments shall be known and
27 designated as assessments of the year in which the amounts became
28 reimbursable. Upon the collection of assessments the county treasurer
29 shall place fifty cents of the total assessments paid on a parcel for
30 fire protection into the county current expense fund to defray the
31 costs of listing, billing, and collecting these assessments. The
32 treasurer shall then transmit the balance to the department.
33 Collections shall be applied against expenses incurred in carrying out
34 the provisions of this section, including necessary and reasonable
35 administrative costs incurred by the department in the enforcement of
36 these provisions. The department may also expend sums collected from
37 owners of forest lands or received from any other source for necessary

1 administrative costs in connection with the enforcement of RCW
2 76.04.660.

3 (6) When land against which forest protection assessments are
4 outstanding is acquired for delinquent taxes and sold at public
5 auction, the state shall have a prior lien on the proceeds of sale over
6 and above the amount necessary to satisfy the county's delinquent tax
7 judgment. The county treasurer, in case the proceeds of sale exceed
8 the amount of the delinquent tax judgment, shall immediately remit to
9 the department the amount of the outstanding forest protection
10 assessments.

11 (7) All nonfederal public bodies owning or administering forest
12 land included in a forest protection zone shall pay the forest
13 protection assessments provided in this section and the special forest
14 fire suppression account assessments under RCW 76.04.630. The forest
15 protection assessments and special forest fire suppression account
16 assessments shall be payable by nonfederal public bodies from available
17 funds within thirty days following receipt of the written notice from
18 the department which is given after October 1st of the year in which
19 the protection was provided. Unpaid assessments are not a lien against
20 the nonfederal publicly owned land but shall constitute a debt by the
21 nonfederal public body to the department and are subject to interest
22 charges at the legal rate.

23 (8) A public body, having failed to previously pay the forest
24 protection assessments required of it by this section, which fails to
25 suppress a fire on or originating from forest lands owned or
26 administered by it, is liable for the costs of suppression incurred by
27 the department or its agent and is not entitled to reimbursement of
28 costs incurred by the public body in the suppression activities.

29 (9) The department may adopt rules to implement this section,
30 including, but not limited to, rules on levying and collecting forest
31 protection assessments.

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