

5144-S

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

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

SB 5144-S - DIGEST

(DIGEST AS ENACTED)

Proposes provisions to protect forest land from exotic forest insects or diseases.

Authorizes the department to contribute resources and expertise to assist the department of agriculture in control or eradication efforts authorized under chapter 17.24 RCW in order to protect forest lands of the state.

Provides that, if either the department of agriculture has not taken action under chapter 17.24 RCW or the commissioner finds that additional efforts are required to control or prevent an outbreak of an exotic forest insect or disease which has not become so habituated that it can no longer be eradicated and that poses an imminent danger of damage to the forested environment by threatening the diversity, abundance, and survivability of native tree species, or both, the commissioner may declare a forest health emergency.

Provides that, upon declaration of a forest health emergency by the commissioner, the department is authorized to enter into agreements with forest landowners, companies, individuals, tribal entities, and federal, state, and local agencies to accomplish control of exotic forest insects or diseases on any affected forest lands using such funds as have been, or may be, made available.

Requires the department to proceed with the control of the exotic forest insects or diseases on affected nonfederal and nontribal forest lands with or without the cooperation of the owner. The department may reimburse cooperating forest landowners and agencies for actual cost of equipment, labor, and materials utilized in cooperative exotic forest insect or disease control projects, as agreed to by the department.

Provides that forest practices applications or notifications are not required for forest practices conducted to control exotic forest insect or disease outbreaks, when conducted by or under the direction of the department of agriculture in carrying out an order of the governor or director of the department of agriculture to implement pest control measures as authorized under chapter 17.24 RCW, and are not required when conducted by or under the direction of the department in carrying out emergency measures under a forest health emergency declaration by the commissioner of public lands as provided in this act.

Finds that since 1995 large numbers of oak and tanoak trees have been dying in the coastal counties of California.

Finds that in addition to affecting several species of oak, this disease has been confirmed to affect several plant species common in Washington's forests, including Douglas Fir, big leaf

maple, huckleberry, rhododendron, madrone, and manzanita.

Requires the department and the department of natural resources to coordinate their sudden oak death syndrome response efforts with other plant pest agencies and private organizations to exchange information, monitor the confirmed incidences of the disease, and take action as appropriate under existing plant pest control authorities to prevent the introduction of the disease into Washington and to control or eradicate the disease if it is determined to be present in the state.