

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SHB 1122

As Passed House:

February 28, 2007

Title: An act relating to continuing the use of contract harvesting for improving forest health on Washington state trust lands.

Brief Description: Improving forest health on state trust lands by continuing the use of contract harvesting for silvicultural treatments.

Sponsors: By House Committee on Agriculture & Natural Resources (originally sponsored by Representatives Kretz, VanDeWege, B. Sullivan, Kagi, McCoy, Orcutt, Eickmeyer, Lantz, Warnick, Wallace, Hailey and Dickerson).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Agriculture & Natural Resources: 1/18/07, 1/25/07 [DPS];

Appropriations: 2/8/07, 2/12/07 [DPS(AGNR)].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/28/07, 96-0.

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Removes the expiration date for contract harvesting on state trust lands with identified forest health deficiencies.
- Requires the Department of Natural Resources to prioritize certain silvicultural treatments for forest health by giving higher priority to the protection of public health and safety, public resources, and the long-term asset value of the trust.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 15 members: Representatives B. Sullivan, Chair; Blake, Vice Chair; Kretz, Ranking Minority Member; Warnick, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Dickerson, Eickmeyer, Grant, Hailey, Kagi, Lantz, McCoy, Newhouse, Orcutt, Strow and VanDeWege.

Staff: Jaclyn Ford (786-7339).

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Majority Report: The substitute bill by Committee on Agriculture & Natural Resources be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 31 members: Representatives Sommers, Chair; Dunshee, Vice Chair; Alexander, Ranking Minority Member; Bailey, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Haler, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Anderson, Buri, Cody, Conway, Darneille, Dunn, Ericks, Fromhold, Grant, Haigh, Hunt, Kagi, Kenney, Kessler, Kretz, Linville, McDermott, McDonald, McIntire, Morrell, Pettigrew, Priest, Schual-Berke, Seaquist, P. Sullivan and Walsh.

Staff: Alicia Dunkin (786-7178).

Background:

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has the authority to directly contract for the removal of timber on state forest lands. The DNR contracts with a firm or individual to perform all the necessary harvesting work to process trees into logs; the DNR then sells the individual log sorts. The contract harvesting program may not be more than 10 percent of the total annual volume of timber offered for sale by the DNR. However, all contract harvesting operations that are conducted primarily for forest health are exempt from the annual 10 percent cap on contract harvesting sales.

Where there are identified health deficiencies in areas of state forest land, the DNR has authority to use contract harvesting or conduct other silvicultural treatments. All harvesting and treatments must be intended to improve the health of the forest stand, and must be in accordance with all applicable forest health plans, laws, and other agreements. The DNR must also give priority to fulfilling existing forest plans when planning harvesting or other silvicultural treatments.

Authority to use the contract harvesting program for silviculture expires on December 31, 2007.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

Removes the December 31, 2007 expiration date, and maintains the authority for the DNR to use contract harvesting for silvicultural treatments on state trust lands with identified health deficiencies.

If the DNR does not have a current management or landscape plan, the DNR will prioritize silvicultural treatments for forest health by giving higher priority to the protection of public health and safety, public resources, and the long-term asset value of the trust.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: (Agriculture & Natural Resources)

(In support) Forest health is an international issue. Because of fire suppression in the past there are too many trees inflicted with disease and other problems; thinning stands will improve these conditions. This is an important tool to improve forest health. Contract harvesting provides a pathway for the DNR to invest in treatments that they may not otherwise be able to afford. The Legislature should look into clearly stating that the DNR should prioritize these treatments for public safety, forest health, and revenue generation. The Legislature should also look into using biofuels to turn this into a double benefit. Contract harvesting has given the DNR the ability to treat many acres, but there are more acres to treat. The board believes these sales are in the best interest of the beneficiaries.

(Opposed) None.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: (Appropriations)

(In support) The bill takes away the sunset and allows the Department of Natural Resources (Department) to do silvicultural work that improves forest health. The Department manages 2.9 million acres of uplands and forest health is an issue, especially with our pine forests, which have too many stems per acre. Drought, pests and wildfire do not generate an economic benefit for the trust beneficiaries, and with this bill we will be able to thin forests to prevent these things. We estimate that we will be able to generate \$200 to \$600 million in value to trust beneficiaries in the future and benefit rural communities presently with this silvicultural work.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: (Agriculture & Natural Resources) Representative Joel Kretz, prime sponsor; Doug Sutherland and Bruce Mackey, Department of Natural Resources; Bill Robinson, Nature Conservancy; Brenda Hood, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction; Miguel Perez-Gibson, Audubon Washington; and Tim Boyd, Vaagen Brothers Lumber.

Persons Testifying: (Appropriations) Representative Kretz, prime sponsor; Bruce Mackey, Department of Natural Resources; and Tim Boyd, Vaagen Brothers Lumber and Boise Cascade.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: (Agriculture & Natural Resources) None.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: (Appropriations) None.