

FINAL BILL REPORT

SSB 5461

C 109 L 07

Synopsis as Enacted

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

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Natural Resources, Ocean & Recreation (originally sponsored by Senators Morton, Jacobsen, Fraser, Hatfield, Hargrove, Benton, Sheldon and Rasmussen; by request of Department of Natural Resources).

Senate Committee on Natural Resources, Ocean & Recreation
House Committee on Agriculture & Natural Resources
House Committee on Appropriations

Background: Historically, the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has sold timber by identifying the timber stand to be sold, appraising the timber, and detailing the terms and conditions of the sale. The successful bidder at auction then has the right to harvest and remove the timber within a specified period.

In 2003, the Legislature directed DNR to create a contract harvest program, where DNR contracts with an individual to harvest timber and process that timber into logs sorted to DNR's specifications. DNR cannot use contract harvesting for more than 10 percent of the annual timber volume offered for sale. The Legislature created a revolving account to accept proceeds from contract harvest log sales and to pay the costs of such sales.

In 2004, the Legislature authorized DNR to conduct contract harvest timber sales, or other silvicultural treatments, in areas of trust forestland where DNR has identified forest health deficiencies. DNR must tailor harvesting and silvicultural treatments to improve the health of forestland and must follow applicable management plans, agreements, and laws pertaining to timber harvests. The Legislature exempted timber removed primarily to address forest health issues from the volume restriction on contract harvesting.

DNR's specific authority to conduct contract harvest timber sales for forest health purposes expires December 31, 2007.

According to information from the Forest Health Work Group, Washington state contains approximately 21 million acres of forestland. By 2005, over 2.5 million of those forested acres contained elevated levels of tree mortality, defoliation, or foliage disease. The western spruce budworm and bark beetle have caused significant tree damage in the state. The work group cites overcrowded forests as contributing to these elevated forest health and fire risks.

Summary: The bill makes permanent DNR's authority to conduct contract harvest timber sales, or other silvicultural treatments, in areas of trust forestland where DNR has identified forest health deficiencies. DNR must prioritize forest health treatments, if no management or

landscape plan exists, in order to protect public health and safety, public resources, and the long-term asset value of the trust.

Votes on Final Passage:

Senate	45	0
House	95	0

Effective: July 22, 2007