

FINAL BILL REPORT

SSB 5463

C 110 L 07

Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Modifying forest fire protection assessments.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Natural Resources, Ocean & Recreation (originally sponsored by Senators Jacobsen, Rockefeller, Morton, Shin and Rasmussen; by request of Department of Natural Resources).

Senate Committee on Natural Resources, Ocean & Recreation

Senate Committee on Ways & Means

House Committee on Agriculture & Natural Resources

House Committee on Appropriations

Background: Forest landowners in Washington must furnish adequate protection against the spread of fire on their forestland. The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) provides fire protection for forestlands whenever a landowner does not do so. Statute defines "forestland" as unimproved land with enough trees or flammable material to create a fire menace to life or property. Sagebrush and grass areas east of the Cascade mountains may be considered forestland if such lands are adjacent to, or intermingled with, tree growth.

Forest Fire Protection Assessment Rate: DNR imposes a forest fire protection assessment on those lands it protects. The assessment rate is: (1) a flat fee of \$14.50 for each parcel; and (2) \$.25 on each acre exceeding 50 acres.

Assessment Refunds: An owner who has paid assessments on two or more parcels, each less than 50 acres and located in the same county, may obtain a partial refund from DNR. If all parcels together are less than 50 acres, the refund equals the flat fee assessments paid reduced by the total of: (1) \$14; and (2) the total amounts retained by the county to defray collection costs. If the parcels total 50 or more acres, the refund equals the flat fee assessments paid reduced by the total of: (1) \$14; (2) \$.25 for each acre exceeding 50 acres; and (3) the total amounts retained by the county.

Summary: The bill increases the current forest fire protection assessment rate from: (1) \$14.50 to \$17.50 for each parcel; and (2) \$.25 to \$.27 on each acre exceeding 50 acres.

The bill also adjusts the refund formula for eligible landowners consistent with the \$3 per parcel and two cent per acre assessment rate increase. If all parcels together are less than 50 acres, the refund equals the flat fee assessments paid reduced by the total of: (1) \$17; and (2) the total amounts retained by the county. If the parcels total more than 50 or more acres, the refund equals the flat fee assessments paid reduced by the total of: (1) \$17; (2) \$.27 for each acre exceeding 50 acres; and (3) the total amounts retained by the county.

Votes on Final Passage:

Senate 46 1

House 91 4

Effective: July 22, 2007