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SENATE BILL 6249

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State of Washington

60th Legislature

2008 Regular Session

By Senators Fraser, Morton, Jacobsen, Swecker, Rockefeller, Rasmussen, Kline, and Kohl-Welles; by request of Department of Natural Resources

Read first time 01/14/08. Referred to Committee on Natural Resources, Ocean & Recreation.

1 AN ACT Relating to improving community and urban forest conditions  
2 in Washington state; and amending RCW 76.15.005, 76.15.010, and  
3 76.15.020.

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

5 **Sec. 1.** RCW 76.15.005 and 1991 c 179 s 1 are each amended to read  
6 as follows:

7 (1) Trees and other woody vegetation are a necessary and important  
8 part of community and urban environments. Community and urban forests  
9 have many values and uses including promoting urban livability,  
10 improving public health, sequestering carbon, conserving energy,  
11 reducing air and water pollution and soil erosion, contributing to  
12 property values, attracting business, reducing glare and noise,  
13 providing aesthetic and historical values, providing wood products, and  
14 affording comfort and protection for humans and wildlife.

15 (2) Well-managed and maintained community and urban forests  
16 minimize catastrophic losses of life, property, and environmental  
17 values due to floods, windstorms, ice storms, wildland fires, and other  
18 natural disasters. Natural disasters, pest and disease infestations,  
19 and lack of protection from human impacts pose significant threats to

1 the community and urban forests. Urban forests provide multiple  
2 benefits and their loss would result in major financial, social, and  
3 environmental costs to Washington.

4 (3) As urban and community areas in Washington state grow, the need  
5 to plan for and protect community and urban forests increases. Cities  
6 and communities benefit from assistance in developing and maintaining  
7 community and urban forestry programs that also address future growth.

8 ((+3)) (4) Assistance and encouragement in establishment,  
9 retention, and enhancement of these forests and trees by local  
10 governments, citizens, organizations, and professionals are in the  
11 interest of the state based on the contributions these forests make in  
12 preserving and enhancing the quality of life of Washington's  
13 municipalities and counties while providing opportunities for economic  
14 development.

15 (5) An inventory and assessment of community and urban forest  
16 conditions enables the department to identify and establish priorities  
17 for actions necessary to preserve and enhance the public investment in  
18 community and urban forest resources.

19 **Sec. 2.** RCW 76.15.010 and 2000 c 11 s 15 are each amended to read  
20 as follows:

21 ((Unless the context clearly requires otherwise,)) The definitions  
22 in this section apply throughout this chapter unless the context  
23 clearly requires otherwise.

24 (1) "Community and urban forest" is that land in and around human  
25 settlements ranging from small communities to metropolitan areas,  
26 occupied or potentially occupied by trees and associated vegetation.  
27 Community and urban forest land may be planted or unplanted, used or  
28 unused, and includes public and private lands, lands along  
29 transportation and utility corridors, and forested watershed lands  
30 within populated areas.

31 (2) "Community and urban forest assessment" means an analysis of  
32 the community and urban forest inventory to establish the value of  
33 urban forest-related benefits, highlight trends and issues of concern,  
34 identify high priority areas to be addressed, outline strategies for  
35 addressing critical issues and urban landscapes, and identify  
36 opportunities for the planting of additional trees to sustain  
37 Washington's urban and community forests.

1       (3) "Community and urban forest inventory" means a management tool  
2 designed to gauge the condition, management status, health, and  
3 diversity of a community and urban forest. An inventory may evaluate  
4 individual trees, groups of trees, or canopy cover within community and  
5 urban forests, and must be periodically updated by the department.

6       (4) "Community and urban forestry" means the planning,  
7 establishment, protection, care, and management of trees and associated  
8 plants individually, in small groups, or under forest conditions within  
9 municipalities and counties.

10       ~~((3))~~ (5) "Department" means the department of natural resources.

11       ~~((4))~~ (6) "Municipality" means a city, town, port district,  
12 public school district, community college district, irrigation  
13 district, weed control district, park district, or other political  
14 subdivision of the state.

15       ~~((5))~~ (7) "Person" means an individual, partnership, private or  
16 public municipal corporation, Indian tribe, state entity, county or  
17 local governmental entity, or association of individuals of whatever  
18 nature.

19       **Sec. 3.** RCW 76.15.020 and 1991 c 179 s 4 are each amended to read  
20 as follows:

21       (1) The department ~~((may))~~ shall establish and maintain a program  
22 in community and urban forestry to accomplish the purpose stated in RCW  
23 76.15.007. The department may assist municipalities and counties in  
24 establishing and maintaining community and urban forestry programs and  
25 encourage persons to engage in appropriate and improved tree management  
26 and care.

27       (2) The department ~~((may))~~ shall advise, encourage, and assist  
28 municipalities, counties, and other public and private entities in the  
29 development and coordination of policies, programs, and activities for  
30 the promotion and preservation of community and urban forestry.

31       (3) The department may appoint a committee or council to advise the  
32 department in establishing and carrying out a program in community and  
33 urban forestry.

34       (4) The department may assist municipal and county tree maintenance  
35 programs by making surplus equipment available on loan where feasible  
36 for community and urban forestry programs and cooperative projects.

1       (5) The commissioner of public lands shall appoint a technical  
2 advisory committee to advise the department in the development of  
3 uniform criteria for a statewide community and urban forest inventory  
4 and assessment.

5       (a) The technical advisory committee must include but is not  
6 limited to: Arborists; municipal foresters; educators; consultants;  
7 researchers; public works and utilities professionals; information  
8 technology specialists; and other affiliated professionals.

9       (b) The criteria for a statewide community and urban forest  
10 inventory may include, but is not limited to: Tree size; species;  
11 location; condition; contribution to canopy cover and volume; available  
12 planting spaces; and economic, social, and monetary value.

13       (c) The technical advisory committee members must be compensated as  
14 provided in RCW 43.03.250 and must receive reimbursement for travel  
15 expenses as provided by RCW 43.03.050 and 43.03.060. Costs associated  
16 with the technical advisory committee may be paid from the general fund  
17 appropriation made available to the department for community and urban  
18 forestry.

19       (6) The department shall, in collaboration with municipalities and  
20 a statewide organization representing urban and community forestry  
21 programs, develop the implementation plan for the inventory and  
22 assessment of the community and urban forests in Washington state.

23       (7) The department shall, in collaboration with educational  
24 institutions, municipalities, corporations, state and national service  
25 organizations, and environmental organizations, conduct a statewide  
26 inventory of community and urban forests. Statewide data must be  
27 maintained and periodically updated by the department and made  
28 available to every municipality.

29       (8) The department shall, in collaboration with a statewide  
30 organization representing urban and community forestry programs,  
31 conduct an urban forest assessment and develop recommendations to the  
32 legislature to improve community and urban forestry in Washington  
33 state. The commissioner of public lands must report progress annually  
34 to the legislature, beginning January 1, 2009.

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