

# FINAL BILL REPORT

## HB 1209

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Synopsis as Enacted

**Brief Description:** Extending the program establishing Christmas tree grower licensure.

**Sponsors:** Representatives MacEwen, Blake, Chandler, Stonier, Wilcox, Springer, Haigh, Morrell and Stanford.

**House Committee on Agriculture & Natural Resources**  
**Senate Committee on Agriculture, Water & Rural Economic Development**

### **Background:**

#### Licensure, Fees, and Exemptions.

The Department of Agriculture's (Department) Plant Protection Division administers horticultural plant inspections and licensing programs. A Christmas tree grower must obtain a Christmas tree grower's license from the Department prior to operating as a grower. The annual licensing fee established by the Department Director (Director) in rule is \$40 annually plus a \$3 per acre assessment. The total annual license fee may not exceed \$5,000.

Fees collected are deposited in the Christmas tree account within the Agricultural Local Fund. The fees may be used only for the Christmas tree program, which may include market surveys and research related to Christmas trees.

Exempted from the licensing requirements is any Christmas tree grower who owns trees, whose business consists solely of retail sales to the ultimate consumer, and who either has less than one acre of Christmas trees, or harvests fewer than 400 Christmas trees per year. Also exempted are licensed nursery dealers who furnish live plants for planting to growers.

The Director may audit licensees during normal business hours to determine that required fees have been paid. The Director must not issue a Christmas tree grower license to any applicant who has failed to pay all assessments. The Director may apply for a court injunction restraining a Christmas tree grower from operating without a license. An order restraining such operation must provide for payment of pertinent court costs, reasonable attorneys' fees, and equitable administrative expenses.

#### Inspections, Certification, and Enforcement.

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*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.*

The Director may adopt rules for: inspection and/or certification of Christmas trees as to freedom from plant pest infestation; Christmas tree grower license fees and tree inspection fees; and fee collection methods.

The Director may, by rule, require that any or all Christmas trees delivered or shipped into Washington be inspected for conformance with the requirements of state law prior to release by the person transporting or delivering them.

The Director may issue a hold order on Christmas trees when there is cause to believe they are damaged, infested, or infected by a plant pest. The Director may prescribe the conditions for holding the material. The Director must condemn any Christmas trees shipped or sold if they are found to be diseased, infected, or infested to the extent that treatment is not practical, and must order such trees either destroyed or returned at the shipper's option.

If the Director is denied access to perform inspections at the horticultural facilities of a Christmas tree grower, the grower may be subject to license revocation.

Any licensee or person financially interested in Christmas trees may request inspection and/or certification services for a fee in an amount set by the Director.

#### Unlawful Actions and Penalty for Noncompliance.

It is unlawful for any person to:

- sell, ship, or transport a Christmas tree unless it meets standards in rule for freedom from plant pest infestation and other requirements;
- falsely claim to be a Christmas tree grower;
- alter an official certificate or other inspection document for plant materials including Christmas trees; or
- substitute any Christmas tree for a Christmas tree covered by an inspection certificate.

A person who fails to comply with the Christmas tree licensure program may be subject to denial, revocation or suspension of the Christmas tree grower license, or assessed a civil penalty of not more than \$1,000 per violation.

The Christmas tree licensure program is set to expire on July 1, 2014.

#### **Summary:**

The program establishing Christmas tree grower licensure is extended from its July 1, 2014 expiration date to July 1, 2020.

#### **Votes on Final Passage:**

House	96	0
Senate	47	1

**Effective:** July 28, 2013