
Appropriations Committee

HB 2976

Brief Description: Repealing the authority for transfers to the Clarke-McNary account.

Sponsors: Representatives Ormsby, Dunshee and Van De Wege.

<p style="text-align: center;">Brief Summary of Bill</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Repeals the authority of the State Treasurer to make transfers into the Clarke-McNary Fund to meet unbudgeted forest firefighting expenses.

Hearing Date: 2/8/16

Staff: Dan Jones (786-7118).

Background:

Clarke-McNary Fund.

The Clarke-McNary Fund was established in 1986 pursuant to a statutory authorization for the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and Washington State University to receive federal funding under the 1924 federal Clarke-McNary Act for specified forestry purposes. The Clarke-McNary Fund is treated as an allotted fund in the custody of the State Treasurer from which the DNR is authorized to make expenditures without an appropriation.

In 1989, the Legislature authorized the State Treasurer to make transfers into the Clarke-McNary Fund to meet unbudgeted forest firefighting expenses. The transfers must be based on schedules submitted by the Director of the Office of Financial Management. The Treasurer may make these transfers from the State General Fund (GF-S) or other accounts, and any amounts so borrowed must be repaid with interest to the appropriate accounts.

In general, expenditure of moneys in the State Treasury requires an appropriation in law.

Department of Natural Resources Fire Suppression.

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 DNR is the primary fire suppression agency for the state of Washington. The DNR has responsibility for protecting state and private forested land, lands that threaten forested lands during a wildfire, and non-forested lands under a protection agreement. The DNR fights wildfires in coordination with a number of state, federal, and local agencies, but in general the DNR is responsible for the costs of fire suppression on lands under DNR protection.

The State Legislature traditionally appropriates a base amount to cover fire suppression costs in the DNR's operating budget. When the DNR's estimated final costs for fire suppression exceed the base amount for the fiscal year, the DNR requests additional funding in a supplemental budget. If the DNR's final costs for fire suppression are greater than the base and supplemental funding appropriated by the Legislature, the DNR may use the Clarke-McNary fund to pay for remaining expenditures. Since 2000, the Clarke-McNary Fund has been used for this purpose in 2006 and 2008.

Summary of Bill:

Legislative findings are made that the Legislature intends to use the appropriations process to budget for firefighting expenditures, rather than authorizing expenditures without an appropriation. The Treasurer's authority to make transfers into the Clarke-McNary Fund to meet unbudgeted forest firefighting expenses is repealed effective July 1, 2016.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 4, 2016.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect on July 1, 2016.