

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5633

As of January 19, 2022

Title: An act relating to planning for the prevention of permanent loss of forests in Washington state.

Brief Description: Planning for the prevention of permanent loss of forests in Washington state.

Sponsors: Senators Rolfes, Short, Das, Gildon, Hasegawa, Hawkins, Lovelett, Nguyen, Nobles, Randall, Wagoner, Warnick and Stanford; by request of Department of Natural Resources.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Agriculture, Water, Natural Resources & Parks: 1/20/22.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Directs the Department of Natural Resources to establish a voluntary, incentive-based plan to conserve at least 1 million acres of working forestland and reforest at least 1 million acres by 2040.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, WATER, NATURAL RESOURCES & PARKS

Staff: Jeff Olsen (786-7428)

Background: The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) manages a number of different categories of land on behalf of Washington, each for a specific purpose and under different management requirements. These categories of land include approximately 3 million acres of federally granted lands and state forestlands, which DNR manages to support common schools, counties, and other public institutions. These lands were granted to the state upon statehood.

In 2017 DNR established the Forest Health Assessment and Treatment Framework (Framework) at the direction of the Legislature. The Framework has three

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components—assessment, treatment, and progress review and reporting. The purpose of the Framework is to proactively and systematically address forest health issues facing the state. DNR must use the Framework to assess and treat fire-prone lands each biennium, with a goal of assessing and treating 1 million acres of land by 2033.

Summary of Bill: DNR must establish a voluntary, incentive-based working and nonworking forest conservation and reforestation plan to conserve at least 1 million acres of working forestland, and reforest at least 1 million acres by 2040. DNR must use the plan to assess and prioritize conservation and reforestation actions each biennium. The plan must use or develop voluntary, incentive-based strategies that address:

- the prevention of actual and potential permanent loss of working and nonworking forestland loss across the state;
- opportunities to implement incentive-based carbon compensation programs for avoided conversion and reforestation;
- the reforestation on forestland impacted by wildfire, pests, disease, landslides, land-use change, and other stressors; and
- tree planting and increased tree canopy coverage in urban areas, prioritizing highly impacted or overburdened communities.

DNR must develop a pilot rapid response fund to test opportunities and barriers to acquire from willing sellers private working forestlands at imminent risk of conversion. Working forests acquired from private willing sellers must be maintained as working forests.

When developing the plan, DNR must conduct the following activities :

- map and prioritize working and nonworking forest areas across the state based on the risk of permanent loss, or critical environmental, economic, cultural, equity, or health benefits;
- evaluate and promote existing opportunities for carbon compensation programs and other incentive-based carbon emissions reducing programs to assist forestland owners interested in voluntarily engaging in carbon markets;
- map and prioritize historically forested areas, including post-wildfire areas and areas where reforestation or afforestation efforts may support environmental restoration, local economic development, or tribal restoration objectives;
- conduct an analysis of the regional reforestation pipeline, including seed collection, nursery capacity, and workforce needs;
- map and prioritize urban and community areas where tree planting may provide environmental, economic, or health benefits particularly to highly impacted or overburdened communities;
- identify tools and incentives to support the goals of the plan including payment for ecological services, technical or financial support to small forestland owners, tax or market incentives, conservation and working forest easements, fee simple land acquisition, or transfer of development rights;
- identify strategies to address underlying economic stressors that contribute to forest conversion including the retention of milling infrastructure, market access, and

- workforce development; and
- provide support to small working forestland owners to achieve the objectives and goals they set for their working forestland.

By December 1, 2022, DNR must submit a report to the Office of Financial Management and the appropriate committees of the Legislature that includes a map and justification of identified priority areas, determines an approach to monitoring that the forested acres are meeting the criteria of success established in the plan, and describes activities to be undertaken consistent with the plan.

By December 1, 2023, DNR must submit the strategic plan for working and nonworking forest conservation and reforestation to the Office of Financial Management and the appropriate committees of the Legislature. Each following biennium, DNR must submit a report to the Legislature that reviews previous activities undertaken consistent with the plan and future activities to be undertaken to reach the goals.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 16, 2022.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.