
Capital Budget Committee

HB 2446

Brief Description: Investing in reforestation efforts following landscape-scale forest disturbances.

Sponsors: Representatives Paul, Dent and Ramel.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Establishes a reforestation grant program at the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to incentivize reforestation after large forest stand replacement events including wildfires and landslides.
- Appropriates \$10 million for the reforestation grant program and \$10 million for reforestation on DNR lands impacted by wildfires.

Hearing Date: 2/1/24

Staff: John Wilson-Tepeli (786-7115).

Background:

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) manages approximately 3 million acres of federally granted lands and state forestlands which are managed to support common schools, counties, and other public institutions. To facilitate reforestation efforts on its managed lands, the DNR maintains a state forest nursery and seed orchard. The DNR is authorized to sell to or exchange tree seedling stock and tree seed with persons intending to restock forest areas. The Department may also provide, at cost, stock or seed to local governments or nonprofit organizations for urban tree planting programs consistent with the community and urban forestry program. Revenue from the sale of stock or seed must be deposited in the State Forest Nursery Revolving Fund for the maintenance of the state tree nursery or the planting of denuded state-owned lands.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

The Natural Climate Solutions Account (NCSA) is an account established to: (a) increase the resilience of the state's waters, forests, and other vital ecosystems to the impacts of climate change; and b) conserve working forestlands at risk of conversion and increase their carbon pollution reduction capacity through sequestration, storage, and overall system integrity. Funding in the account must be spent in a manner that is consistent with existing and future assessments of climate risks and resilience from the scientific community and expressed concerns of and impacts to overburdened communities. Funding in the account may be allocated for a broad range of purposes, including various uses related to forest health, carbon sequestration, and climate change and wildfire resilience.

Summary of Bill:

Reforestation Grant Program.

The DNR must administer a reforestation grant program, subject to appropriation, designed to incentivize and invest in reforestation after large forest stand replacement events such as wildfire, landslides, volcanic eruptions, tsunamis, earthquakes, and other natural catastrophic events that damage the ecoservices of natural or managed forests. The DNR must limit the overall size of the program to the level of appropriations provided specifically for this purpose. An appropriation of \$10 million from the NCSA is provided for the reforestation grant program.

Grant Program Criteria.

The DNR must establish criteria for the grant program, which must include: (a) a cost-share percentage with the grant recipient not to exceed 25 percent of the grant award, including any in-kind contributions; (b) minimum and maximum potential grant awards; (c) applicant eligibility for tribal ownerships, nonprofit landowners and managers, industrial and nonindustrial private forestland owners, local governments, and other state agencies; (d) priority scoring for reforestation investments on private forestland whose owners or managers are not required, by regulation or other mechanism, to replant after a catastrophic event; (e) specific considerations for grant applicants proposing to include, as part of the project, the reforestation of riparian buffers, potentially unstable slopes, or other areas where harvest is restricted due to state regulations that were affected by the underlying catastrophic event; and (f) consideration of any relevant environmental justice assessments. Lands owned by the federal government or lands managed by DNR are not eligible for the grant program.

Use of the Natural Climate Solutions Account.

The allowable uses of the NCSA are expanded to include incentivizing and investing in reforestation of lands affected by catastrophic natural disturbances, including for the reforestation grant program created under the bill, and funding reforestation efforts by the DNR following wildfires.

An appropriation of \$10 million from the NCSA is provided to the DNR for postfire reforestation of the forestlands managed by the DNR. The DNR must prioritize reforestation expenditures for the benefit of state trust lands.

Appropriation: The sum of \$20,000,000 is appropriated from the Natural Climate Solutions Account to the Department of Natural Resources.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 23, 2024.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.