

SENATE BILL REPORT

HB 1812

AS REPORTED BY COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT & NATURAL RESOURCES,
MARCH 25, 1991

Brief Description: Adopting the woodland stewardship assistance act.

SPONSORS: Representatives Riley, Brumsickle, Sheldon, Rasmussen and Cooper.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES & PARKS

SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT & NATURAL RESOURCES

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Metcalf, Chairman; Oke, Vice Chairman; Amondson, Barr, Conner, Patterson, Snyder, and Sutherland.

Staff: Vic Moon (786-7469)

Hearing Dates: March 25, 1991

BACKGROUND:

In Washington, 40,000 non-industrial woodland owners own about 4.4 million acres or 25 percent of the state's commercial forest land. These lands are estimated to contain about 35.8 billion board feet of timber. Much of this land is understocked and unmanaged. The U.S. Forest Service has estimated that over one million acres of Washington's private non-industrial woodlands currently need treatment or will require treatment by the end of the decade.

Currently there is no coordinated state program to encourage landowners to manage their forest lands for the full variety of forest resources and benefits that these lands are capable of producing. The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) operates a limited service forestry program that provides technical forestry assistance and management planning. The traditional orientation of this program has been maximum fiber production. There is no statutory direction to DNR regarding the operation of such a program.

A recent survey of non-industrial private landowners shows that a high percentage of these landowners place a higher priority on various conservation purposes than they do on production of fiber and income from timber sales. The result is that a lot of these lands are not actively managed. In many situations, with the right information and planning, it is possible to enhance the primary goals of landowners, and simultaneously harvest timber.

SUMMARY:

A new chapter in law is created dealing with stewardship assistance for owners of non-industrial forests and woodlands.

The purpose of the chapter is to: (a) promote the coordination and delivery of services to non-industrial forest and woodland owners; and (b) facilitate the production of forest products, enhancement of wildlife and fisheries, protection of streams and wetlands, culturing of special plants, availability of recreation opportunities and the maintenance of scenic beauty though meeting the landowner's objectives.

The Department of Natural Resources is authorized to establish and maintain a non-industrial forest and woodland owner assistance program. The department may provide technical assistance to landowners and assist cooperating organizations in providing similar assistance. The department is authorized to provide financial assistance, loan or rent surplus equipment, and appoint a stewardship advisory committee to assist in establishing and operating this program.

The department is authorized to receive and disperse federal monies, as well as donations from public and private sources.

Appropriation: none

Revenue: none

Fiscal Note: requested February 13, 1991

TESTIMONY FOR:

The legislation is needed to help small landowners and preserve the timber land base of the state.

TESTIMONY AGAINST: None

TESTIFIED: Laura Eckert, Department of Natural Resources (pro)