

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 5159

As Passed House
April 13, 1993

Title: An act relating to urban forestry.

Brief Description: Encouraging landscaping for energy conservation.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Ecology & Parks (originally sponsored by Senators Talmadge, Owen and Fraser).

Brief History:

Reported by House Committee on:

Natural Resources & Parks, March 30, 1993, DP;
Passed House, April 13, 1993, 63-35.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES & PARKS

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 10 members:
Representatives Pruitt, Chair; R. Johnson, Vice Chair;
Morton, Ranking Minority Member; Stevens, Assistant Ranking
Minority Member; Dunshee; Linville; Schoesler; Sheldon;
Valle; and Wolfe.

Staff: Linda Byers (786-7129).

Background: In some parts of the country, trees are being planted in an attempt to conserve energy, reduce summer cooling loads on utilities, and provide other benefits. In 1991, the Legislature gave the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) the authority to establish and maintain a program in community and urban forestry. This followed a legislative finding that community and urban forests have many values and uses, including conserving energy, reducing air and water pollution and soil erosion, contributing to property values, attracting business, reducing glare and noise, providing aesthetic and historical values, and affording comfort and protection for humans and wildlife.

Summary of Bill: The Legislature finds that planting trees in urban areas for shading and cooling reduces energy consumption. The Legislature also finds that tree planting can benefit the environment in many ways and can improve urban aesthetics, thereby improving public and private property values. The Legislature further finds that urban forestry programs should promote the use of tree species

which will not interfere with or cause damage to public service facilities.

Municipal utilities, cities providing utility services, and gas and electric companies regulated by the Utilities and Transportation Commission are all encouraged to provide information to their customers regarding landscaping that includes tree planting for energy conservation. These entities are also encouraged to request voluntary donations for urban forestry purposes from their customers.

The Department of General Administration (GA) is encouraged to use appropriate tree plantings as part of its program to reduce energy use in state buildings and facilities. GA is also to consider energy conservation objectives among other landscape objectives in planting and maintaining trees on grounds which it administers.

The Department of Natural Resources may provide, at cost, stock or seed to local governments or nonprofit organizations for urban tree planting programs. The department may enter into agreements with nonprofit organizations whose primary purpose is urban tree planting. The department is to encourage urban planting of tree varieties which are site-appropriate and which provide the best combination of energy and water conservation, fire safety and other safety, wildlife habitat, and aesthetic value.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: The bill promotes urban forestry, and recognizes the importance of putting the appropriate kinds of trees in appropriate places. The bill provides for working with utilities to avoid conflicts regarding trees. Trees help improve a hostile urban setting, improve aesthetics, and provide urban wildlife habitat. The bill will help cities and other groups get trees at cost from DNR. The energy conservation emphasis of the bill is important.

Testimony Against: None.

Witnesses: Eric Swansen, city of Lacey; Steven Meacham, Department of Natural Resources; and Ron Newbry, Pacificorp (all in favor).