

HOUSE BILL REPORT

ESSB 6228

As Reported By House Committee On:
Natural Resources & Parks

Title: An act relating to definitions of agricultural and forest land of long-term commercial significance.

Brief Description: Revising provisions relating to definitions of agricultural and forest land of long-term commercial significance.

Sponsors: Senators Haugen, Anderson, Owen, Hargrove, Sellar, Oke, McAuliffe and M. Rasmussen.

Brief History:

Reported by House Committee on:
Natural Resources & Parks, February 25, 1994, DPA.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES & PARKS

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Pruitt, Chair; R. Johnson, Vice Chair; Stevens, Ranking Minority Member; McMorris, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Linville; Schoesler; Sheldon; B. Thomas; and Valle.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 2 members: Representatives Dunshee; and Wolfe.

Staff: Linda Byers (786-7129).

Background: The Growth Management Act defines "forest land" as land primarily useful for growing trees for commercial purposes and land that has long-term commercial significance for growing trees commercially.

Summary of Amended Bill: The Growth Management Act definition of "forest land" is changed to mean land primarily devoted to growing trees for long-term commercial production on land that can be economically and practically managed for such production. In making a determination about forest land, the following factors are to be considered: (a) the proximity of the land to urban, suburban, and rural settlements; (b) surrounding parcel sizes, and adjacent and nearby land uses; (c) long-term local economic conditions; and (4) the availability of

public facilities and services conducive to conversion of the land to other uses.

It is not the intent of the Legislature in changing this definition to require every county that has already completed its interim forest land designations to review its actions until the adoption of its comprehensive plans and development regulations.

Upland finfish hatcheries are incorporated into the Growth Management Act definition of agricultural land.

Amended Bill Compared to Engrossed Substitute Bill: The underlying bill also made changes to the definition of the term "long-term commercial significance." The amended bill incorporates many of these changes into the new definition of forest land. The amended bill also adds upland finfish hatcheries to the definition of agricultural land.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: The forest products industry is in support of the bill and is working with another concerned party to resolve differences. The basis for the new definition is language in the existing WAC. There is a problem here that needs to be corrected; this is no longer just a Snohomish County issue. At the time the Growth Management Act was enacted, the intent was to treat agricultural and forest land the same way. It was not the intent to hold private property rights hostage. The bill will not solve all the problems, but will help counties make decisions.

Testimony Against: Amending "long-term commercial significance" would result in changes to the definitions of agricultural and mineral lands; it would be better to just amend the definition of forest lands. There are already interim designations and an existing appeal process, so there is no need to interrupt this process now. There are rules in place to implement this policy without the need for a bill. The criterion of "economically and practically" is not objective and will change over time. This bill may limit local authority in designating forest lands.

Witnesses: Senator Mary Margaret Haugen, prime sponsor (pro); Tim Boyd, Washington Forest Protection Association (pro); Judy Turpin, Washington Environmental Council (con); Jeff Parsons, National Audubon Society (con); and Mike Ryherd, 1000 Friends of Washington.