

SENATE BILL REPORT

SSB 5159

AS PASSED SENATE, MARCH 17, 1993

Brief Description: Encouraging landscaping for energy conservation.

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

SENATE COMMITTEE ON ECOLOGY & PARKS

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5159 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Fraser, Chairman; Barr, Deccio, McCaslin, Sutherland, and Talmadge.

Staff: Cathy Baker (786-7708)

Hearing Dates: January 29, 1993; February 17, 1993

BACKGROUND:

Community and urban forestry refers to the planting and managing of trees in parks, greenbelts and along streets. Urban forests can help improve air quality, provide wildlife habitat, reduce soil erosion, and increase real estate values.

A recently released report by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency indicates that strategic planting of trees around buildings and in urban areas may significantly reduce energy use, depending on the region and other conditions. Nationally, a number of utilities and municipalities have begun programs in tree planting for energy conservation.

In 1991 the Legislature authorized the Department of Natural Resources to establish a community and urban forestry program in order to assist municipalities, and other public and private entities in developing urban forestry programs. The program provides technical and financial assistance to communities and local organizations, and administers federal grants. The program is currently supported entirely by federal funds from the U.S. Forest Service and the Small Business Administration.

SUMMARY:

A finding is made that tree planting in urban areas mitigates the urban "heat island effect" and reduces energy consumption. A finding is also made that urban forestry programs should promote the use of appropriate tree species that will not damage public service facilities.

Utilities are encouraged to provide information to customers regarding the energy conservation functions of tree planting. Utilities are also encouraged to request voluntary donations from customers for urban forestry programs.

The energy conservation and other benefits of urban forestry are incorporated into the energy conservation provisions applicable to municipal utilities, private utilities, and the state government's Department of General Administration.

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is authorized to enter into agreements with nonprofit organizations to encourage public education and volunteer opportunities in urban tree planting. The DNR is also authorized to provide technical assistance in tree planting for energy conservation.

The DNR may provide nursery stock, at cost, to local governments or nonprofit organizations for urban tree planting programs.

Appropriation: none

Revenue: none

Fiscal Note: available

TESTIMONY FOR:

The bill would allow the DNR to support local urban forestry programs by providing seedlings at cost. Trees are an important part of urban infrastructure and have been shown to reduce energy use. Some utilities have already initiated tree planting programs for energy conservation purposes.

TESTIMONY AGAINST: None

TESTIFIED: Steve Hallmark, Puget Power; Tim Sweeney and Ken Elgin, Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission; PRO: Arden Olson, Department of Natural Resources; Ken Johnson, U.S. Forest Service; Sherry Appleton, Washington Community and Urban Forestry Council; Ron Newbry, Bill Edmonds, Pacificorp