

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1945

As Passed House

March 11, 1997

Title: An act relating to county expenditures of revenues generated by forest board lands.

Brief Description: Concerning foreclosed property deeded by a county for use as state forest land.

Sponsors: By House Committee on Natural Resources (originally sponsored by Representatives Dunn and Boldt).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Natural Resources: 2/26/97, 3/4/97 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 3/11/97, 97-0.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 11 members: Representatives Buck, Chairman; Sump, Vice Chairman; Thompson, Vice Chairman; Regala, Ranking Minority Member; Butler, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Alexander; Anderson; Chandler; Hatfield; Pennington and Sheldon.

Staff: Linda Byers (786-7129).

Background: The Department of Natural Resources manages forest board transfer lands on behalf of 21 counties. The department may deduct a maximum of 25 percent from the proceeds derived from timber sales and other revenue generating activities on the lands, using these moneys for administration, reforestation, and protection of forest lands. The remaining proceeds go to the respective counties and are distributed to various funds in the same manner as general tax dollars are distributed.

Current law provides a modification to the distribution of revenues within the counties for counties with populations of less than 9,000 people. For a county with less than 9,000 people, the county may first apply the revenues it receives from its forest board transfer lands towards any indebtedness existing in its current expense fund. According to 1990 U.S. Census data, Wahkiakum County and Skamania County fall

under the 9,000-person population threshold, with Skamania County's population close to the threshold.

Summary of Bill: The population threshold is increased to 16,000 people. This would allow Skamania County to continue to apply the revenue it receives from its forest board transfer lands first to any indebtedness existing in its current expense fund.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 20, 1997.

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

Testimony For: Small timber-based counties have to provide essential services, and the demand for essential services has increased while revenues have decreased. Some 88 percent of Skamania County is in public ownership. Timber revenues are the lifeblood of these counties. Only two counties currently use this provision, and this bill will not add any additional counties.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Representative Jim Dunn, prime sponsor; and Bill Vogler, Washington State Association of Counties (both in favor).