

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 5619

As Reported By House Committee On:
Natural Resources

Title: An act relating to forest fire protection assessment.

Brief Description: Modifying the forest fire protection assessment process.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Natural Resources, Parks & Recreation (originally sponsored by Senator Jacobsen; by request of Office of Financial Management).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Natural Resources: 3/31/99, 4/2/99 [DPA].

**Brief Summary of Substitute Bill
(As Amended by House Committee)**

- Small landowners with multiple parcels of forest land may apply to the Department of Natural Resources for a single forest fire protection assessment.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 12 members: Representatives Buck, Republican Co-Chair; Regala, Democratic Co-Chair; Anderson, Democratic Vice Chair; Sump, Republican Vice Chair; G. Chandler; Clements; Doumit; Eickmeyer; Ericksen; Pennington; Rockefeller and Stensen.

Staff: Bill Lynch (786-7092).

Background:

Owners of forest land within forest protection zones are required to pay assessments to the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) for fire protection. A landowner who has paid assessments on two or more parcels, each of which contain less than 50 acres in the same county, is eligible for a refund. The landowner must submit an application for a refund to the department each year in which the assessments were paid. The department

may not provide a refund unless sufficient verification is provided that all assessments and property taxes on the property have been paid.

Summary of Amended Bill:

Owners of small parcels of forest lands may submit an application listing the parcels owned to the Department of Natural Resources for the computation of forest fire protection assessments. The property owner may submit only one application per county. The DNR must compute the assessment and allocate one parcel for collecting the assessment. The county bills the assessment to this one identified parcel. The property owner is required to notify the DNR of any changes in ownership of the parcels.

Property owners with the following number of parcels may apply to the DNR in the year indicated:

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>NUMBER OF PARCELS</u>
2000	10 or more parcels
2001	8 or more parcels
2002	6 or more parcels
2003	4 or more parcels
2004 and thereafter	2 or more parcels

Amended Bill Compared to Substitute Bill: The original bill did not change the current mechanism of assessments and refunds except to eliminate the need to file annual applications for the refund.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: (In support) This corrects the mechanism for assessing small property owners for fire protection. It avoids the need for a refund and streamlines the process through a phased-in approval.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Fred Saeger, Washington Association of County Officials: and Nels Hanson, Washington Farm Forestry.

(Neutral) John Hassell, Simpson Timber Co.