

SENATE BILL REPORT

ESHB 1817

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Agriculture & Rural Economic Development, April 2, 1999

Title: An act relating to horticultural pest and disease boards.

Brief Description: Funding horticultural pest and disease boards.

Sponsors: House Committee on Agriculture & Ecology (originally sponsored by Representatives Grant and Clements).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Agriculture & Rural Economic Development: 3/22/99, 4/2/99 [DPA].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Majority Report: Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators Rasmussen, Chair; T. Sheldon, Vice Chair; Gardner, Honeyford, Morton, Stevens and Swecker.

Staff: David Johnson (786-7754)

Background: Horticultural pest and disease boards are county created entities that inspect land for horticultural pests and diseases. The boards may order a landowner to control those pests or diseases, and may control the pests or diseases at the landowner's expense if the owner fails to do so.

Although a county may levy a horticultural tax on property, it is unclear whether this tax may be in addition to the county's regular annual tax levy. Some counties need funds in addition to their regular levy to fund the pest and disease boards.

Summary of Amended Bill: Counties are authorized to fund horticultural pest and disease boards three ways. Boards may be funded from the county general fund or revenues, from a horticultural tax on property, or from an assessment against all lands, based on benefit received, except certain forest lands. Sufficient operating funds no longer are required to be provided from the horticultural tax.

The assessment process is modeled after the weed control process. The pest board must hold a public hearing and submit its proposed assessment to the county legislative authority for approval. The assessment constitutes a lien against the property. Collection of the assessments is done in accordance with existing statutory procedures.

Boards may enter into agreements with Indian tribes and federal, state, and local government agencies to carry out their duties.

Amended Bill Compared to Substitute Bill: The striking amendment includes hardwood trees with growing cycles less than 15 years, instead of just 12 years. Assessment collection procedures to follow current statutes instead of a unique process.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: Boards have limited funding while playing an increasingly important role in controlling and preventing pests and diseases. Needs are increasing and these additional options will help.

Testimony Against: The bill should use existing assessment procedures and include hardwood trees with up to 15 year growing cycles.

Testified: PRO: Jim Potts, Rural Counties; Fred Saeger, WA Assn. of County Officials; Mary Beth Lang, Department of Agriculture.