

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1014

As Reported by House Committee On:

Natural Resources

Title: An act relating to the landowner contingency forest fire suppression account.

Brief Description: Preserving appropriated funds and interest earned in the landowner contingency forest fire suppression account.

Sponsors: Representatives Pennington, Mielke, Buck and Jackley.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Natural Resources: 1/22/01, 2/7/01 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Requires unexpended funds in the landowner contingency forest fire suppression account to remain in the account instead of lapsing into the state general fund.
- Credits interest earned on monies in the landowner contingency forest fire suppression account to that account rather than the state general fund. The transfer of the earned interest from the state general fund to this account does not affect the state expenditure limit.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 12 members: Representatives Doumit, Democratic Co-Chair; Sump, Republican Co-Chair; Pearson, Republican Vice Chair; Rockefeller, Democratic Vice Chair; Buck, G. Chandler, Edwards, Eickmeyer, Ericksen, Jackley, Murray and Pennington.

Staff: Bill Lynch (786-7092).

Background:

Most forest landowners pay a forest protection assessment to the Department of Natural

Resources (DNR) to protect their property from fire. In addition to this assessment, most forest landowners also pay into the landowner contingency forest fire suppression account.

Monies from the landowner contingency forest fire suppression account are used to pay for emergency fire suppression costs for fires caused by the operations of landowners who pay into the fund. Annual assessments are paid into this account by participating landowners at a rate established by DNR. When establishing the assessments, DNR is directed to seek a balance in the account of \$3 million dollars. The assessments for emergency fire suppression may be adjusted annually by DNR subject to statutory caps.

The annual assessment that may be imposed by DNR for emergency fire suppression differs by the amount of acreage owned. Landowners who own parcels of 50 acres or less pay a flat fee assessment of no more than \$7.50. Landowners owning parcels of more than 50 acres pay the flat fee assessment of no more than \$7.50, plus a per acre assessment for every acre over 50 acres not to exceed 15 cents per acre.

Although monies in the landowner contingency forest fire suppression account are not subject to appropriation by the Legislature, monies that are not expended prior to the end of the biennium in which they were collected lapse into the state general fund. None of the interest earned from money in this account are credited to the account.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

Monies in the landowner contingency forest fire suppression account which are not expended before the end of the biennium in which they were collected remain in the account instead of lapsing into the state general fund. Interest earned on monies in the landowner contingency forest fire suppression account is credited to that account. The state spending limit does not apply to interest earned from money in the landowner contingency forest fire suppression account that is credited to that account rather than the state general fund.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

Language is added so that the state spending limit does not apply to interest earned from money in the landowner contingency forest fire suppression account that is credited to that account rather than the state general fund. Technical changes are made to delete references to appropriated monies because the account is not subject to legislative appropriation.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not Requested.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: Section 3 of this act expires March 1, 2002. Section 4 of this act takes effect March 1, 2002.

Testimony For: This will provide a needed boost for the fire suppression account. Since landowners contribute the money for the account, the interest earned on this money should stay in the account.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: (In Support) Representative Pennington, prime sponsor; Mark Kahley, Department of Natural Resources; and Ryan Spiller, Washington Fire Commissioners Association.