

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SB 5108

As Reported by House Committee On:

Natural Resources

Title: An act relating to the growing of short-rotation hardwood trees on agricultural land.

Brief Description: Modifying provisions relating to the growing of short-rotation hardwood trees on agricultural land.

Sponsors: By Senators T. Sheldon, Benton, Snyder, Hargrove, Sheahan, Gardner, Rasmussen and Stevens.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Natural Resources: 3/30/01 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- The definition of short-rotation hardwoods is modified to apply to hardwood trees that are cultivated by agricultural methods in growing cycles shorter than 15 years rather than 10 years.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

Majority Report: 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:

Short-rotation hardwoods are defined as hardwood trees, such as hybrid cottonwoods, that are cultivated by agricultural methods in growing cycles of less than 10 years. These short-rotation hardwoods are grown primarily for chipping purposes, and are treated more like an agricultural crop than timber. Short-rotation hardwoods grown pursuant to agricultural methods are not considered to be forest trees for application of the forest practices rules.

Some growers of these hardwoods have suggested that the growing cycle should be increased to accommodate variations in site productivity and to account for wildlife damage to young plantings. If the growing cycle for short-rotation hardwoods is increased, the trees could also be used for wood products other than chips.

Short-rotation hardwoods are not subject to the state excise tax on harvesting timber. The land on which short-rotation hardwoods are grown is treated as agricultural land for property tax purposes, if the land was previously used in agriculture.

Summary of Bill:

The growing cycle for short-rotation hardwood trees, for purposes of being treated as an agricultural crop, is increased from 10 years to 15 years. Short-rotation hardwoods are specifically listed as an agricultural product for purposes of application of the business and occupation tax to reflect current application of the law. Short rotation hardwoods are specifically exempted from application of the forest practices rules to reflect current interpretation of the law.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not Requested.

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

Testimony For: This bill will create more opportunities for people while providing more environmental protection.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Senator Tim Sheldon, prime sponsor.