

HOUSE BILL REPORT

ESHB 2753

As Passed House:

February 16, 2004

Title: An act relating to the management of state-owned forest land.

Brief Description: Studying sustainable forestry certification.

Sponsors: By House Committee on Agriculture & Natural Resources (originally sponsored by Representatives Linville and Rockefeller).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Agriculture & Natural Resources: 1/30/04, 2/6/04 [DPS].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/16/04, 55-41.

Brief Summary of Engrossed Substitute Bill

- Directs the Department of Natural Resources to study certain sustainable forestry certification options available to the state.
- Delays the final adoption of a sustainable harvest calculation by the Board of Natural Resources until the report required by the act is completed.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 7 members: Representatives Linville, Chair; Rockefeller, Vice Chair; Eickmeyer, Grant, Hunt, McDermott and Quall.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 6 members: Representatives Schoesler, Ranking Minority Member; Holmquist, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Kristiansen, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Chandler, Orcutt and Sump.

Staff: Jason Callahan (786-7117).

Background:

Forest Certification

Forest certification is a process in which a forest landowner undergoes an audit of the forest practices utilized on his or her land by a third party organization. If the forest practices of the landowner are modified to satisfy the standards for long-term sustainability identified by the third party organization, then that organization will "certify" that any wood products originating from that land holding were grown in a way that will provide long-term sustainability for the forest resource.

Currently, state-owned forest lands are not certified by any of the known third-party organizations. Certain lands managed by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) have previously been audited by the third-party organization known as the Forest Stewardship Council; however, the required identified management changes were not instituted, and certification has not been granted.

Sustainable Yield Calculation

The DNR is responsible for managing state-owned lands forest lands on a sustained yield basis. To achieve a sustained yield, the DNR must manage the state's forests to provide a continuing harvest level without any prolonged curtailments or cessation of harvests. To satisfy this requirement, the DNR is required to periodically adjust their sustained yield management program and recalculate a sustainable harvest level. That level represents the volume of timber scheduled for sale from state-owned lands during the upcoming planning decade.

Summary of Engrossed Substitute Bill:

Forest Certification

The DNR is required to prepare a report for the Legislature and the Board of Natural Resources by no later than September 14, 2004, that studies sustainable forestry certification options that are available to the state. This includes the identification of:

- Changes to current forest management practices that would be needed to attain certification;
- Added costs incurred due to management changes;
- If the preferred sustainable harvest calculation would satisfy the requirements of the state's habitat conservation plans; and
- How the preferred sustainable harvest calculation would increase or decrease the cost of compliance with certification standards.

The report is required to contain enough detail so as to allow the findings to be reviewed by the public.

Sustainable Yield Calculation

The Board of Natural Resources may not adopt a final sustainable yield calculation until the report has been completed by the DNR, a legislative review of the report has been conducted, and the Board of Natural Resources has held at least one public hearing on the results of the legislative review.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.

Testimony For: (Original bill) The forest management conducted on the state forests is already close to the standards for certification. Gaining the certification will make the state more competitive in the marketing of its timber. By embracing the concept, government can play an important leadership role.

Certification does not erode the productivity of the forests, and it increases the value of the timber growing on the forests. Certified forests are forests that are managed in a healthy manner, and promote diverse wildlife.

The wood products market needs certified wood to fill demand. There is a shortage of certified wood in Washington, and manufacturers are having to look towards other states to fill their needs. Washington should take advantage of the growing market demand.

Certification standards have been adopted worldwide, including in the state-managed forests of other states and on Fort Lewis. Certification is not just a trend. It is a way to educate the public that not all forest activities have a negative effect on the environment.

Testimony Against: The sustainable harvest calculations have already undergone an involved public process. Adding new steps would be redundant. The level chosen by the Board of Natural Resources will be both environmentally and economically sustainable over time, and will not preclude future certification. The DNR should be able to go forward with their existing plans for the adoption of the harvest level.

Research shows that adapting the state's forest management to comply with certification standards would lower revenue to the beneficiaries of the forest trusts by adding further restrictions. This runs counter to the state's undivided loyalty to the beneficiaries. The profit margin for certified wood is small, and mostly realized by the retailers and not the producer.

The protections in the forest practice rules and habitat conservation plans offer strong environmental protections, so certification is unnecessary.

Persons Testifying: (In support) (Original bill) Douglas Grover, Lanoga

Corporation/Lumberman's; Bettina von Hagen, Ecotrust; Nina Carter, National Audubon Society; Mike Ryherd, Northwest Ecosystems Alliance; Bill Robinson, Nature Conservancy of Washington; Peter Goldman, Washington Forest Law Center; and Alan Soicher.

(Concerns) (Original bill) Bruce Mackey and Craig Partridge, Washington State Department of Natural Resources; Bill Garvin, Washington Forest Protection Association; John Gorman, Sustainable Forestry Initiative; Bill Stauffacher, American Forest and Paper Association; Dean Schwickerath, Grays Harbor Audubon Society; and Rod Fleck, City of Forks.

(Opposed) Carol Johnson, North Olympic Timber Action Committee.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.