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**Agriculture & Natural Resources  
Committee**

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**HB 2753**

**Brief Description:** Creating a joint legislative forest management work group and requiring final sustainable harvest levels to be adopted by rule.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Linville and Rockefeller.

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Creates the Joint Legislative Forest Management Work Group to study the third-party certification options available to the state.
- Requires the final sustainable harvest level calculation by the Department of Natural Resources to be formally adopted by the rulemaking procedures of the Administrative Procedures Act.

**Hearing Date:** 1/30/04

**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 Bill:**

#### Forest Certification

The Joint Legislative Forest Management Work Group (Work Group) is created to meet in the 2004 legislative interim. The Work Group is charged with studying the third-party certification options available to the state. This includes:

- Examining the standards of various certification organizations;
- Exploring the costs and benefits associated with third-party certification of state forests;
- Examining the details of any completed certification audits of state forests; and
- Comparing the standards of various certification organizations with the forest management practices currently required on state-owned forests under the Forest Practices Rules and any applicable habitat conservation plans.

The Work Group could have up to twelve members appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the President of the Senate. Representation on the Work Group must reflect an equal proportion of the two major political parties. Staff for the Work Group will be provided by the Office of Program Research and Senate Committee Services.

If the Work Group reaches any recommendations, these must be forwarded to the entire Legislature in the form of draft legislation by the start of the 2005 legislative session.

#### Sustainable Yield Calculation

The DNR's final sustainable harvest level calculation must be formally adopted by the rulemaking procedures of the Administrative Procedures Act.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested 1/20/04.

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