

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6505

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Natural Resources, Energy & Water, February 4, 2004

Title: An act relating to fire suppression capability in the wildland and urban interface areas.

Brief Description: Assessing fire suppression capabilities in the interface areas between wildlands and urban areas.

Sponsors: Senators Doumit, Morton, Fraser and Parlette.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Natural Resources, Energy & Water: 2/4/04 [DPS].
Ways & Means:

SENATE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES, ENERGY & WATER

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6505 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Morton, Chair; Hewitt, Vice Chair; Doumit, Fraser, Hale, Honeyford, Oke and Regala.

Staff: Richard Rodger (786-7461)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Staff: Brian Sims (786-7431)

Background: The State Fire Protection Policy Board consists of eight members appointed by the Governor: (1) one representative of fire chiefs; (2) one insurance industry representative; (3) one representative of cities and towns; (4) one representative of counties; (5) one full-time, paid, career fire fighter; (6) one volunteer fire fighter; (7) one representative of fire commissioners; and (8) one representative of fire control programs of the Department of Natural Resources.

The board is responsible for developing a comprehensive state policy regarding fire protection services. The board's duties include: adopting a state fire training and education master plan, including wildland fire training; adopting a state fire protection master plan; monitoring fire protection in the state; establishing and promoting state arson control programs; and promoting mutual aid and disaster planning for fire services.

The board also advises the chief of the Washington State Patrol and the director of Fire Protection on matters pertaining to their duties and related budgeting and fiscal matters.

Summary of Substitute Bill: The State Fire Protection Policy Board, through the director of Fire Protection within the State Patrol, must conduct an assessment of fire suppression capability in the interface areas between wildlands and urban areas throughout the state.

The board must encourage the participation of fire suppression jurisdictions, fire fighters, the insurance industry, the building industry, the Department of Natural Resources, the Emergency Management Division of the Military Department, and local governments in conducting the assessment. The board must invite the associations of fire chiefs and fire commissioners to participate in the assessment and to facilitate involvement of fire protection districts and fire departments. The Fire Protection Bureau of the State Patrol will provide staff assistance to the board in conducting the assessment.

The assessment should include: (a) an inventory of the interface areas; (b) a general description of current and projected coverage by fire protection jurisdictions; (c) a review of existing agreements among fire jurisdictions for mutual assistance; (d) an assessment of water sources and infrastructure for fire flow delivery in interface areas; (e) an assessment of land use, building and fire codes within such areas, defensible space requirements, egress and ingress routes from the interface areas, and the effects upon wildland fire hazard and potential damages; (f) recommendations for a system of classifying interface areas; and (g) recommendations to strengthen fire prevention and suppression in interface areas.

The board must issue a report to the Legislature by December 1, 2004.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The building industry is added to the list of groups to be consulted in conducting the fire suppression capabilities. Technical corrections are also made.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: There are 542 different fire districts with varying capabilities. This bill is greatly needed for the state agencies to determine the existing capabilities of these districts to suppress fires in the areas between urban cities and the open wildlands. The assessment will assist agencies in coordinating their efforts.

Testimony Against: The building industry would like to be added to the groups that are encouraged to participate in the interface assessment.

Testified: Anjela Foser, WSP (pro); Mark Kahley, DNR (pro); Andy Cook, BIAW (questions).