

SENATE BILL REPORT

SSB 6581

As Passed Senate, February 17, 2004

Title: An act relating to funding for forest fire protection.

Brief Description: Funding forest fire protection.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Natural Resources, Energy & Water (originally sponsored by Senator Hargrove).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Natural Resources, Energy & Water: 2/4/04 [DPS].
Passed Senate: 2/17/04, 48-0.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES, ENERGY & WATER

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6581 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

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

Staff: Richard Rodger (786-7461)

Background: Owners of forest land are required to adequately protect against the spread of fire from or onto their property during the fire season. The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) provides fire protection for forest landowners who are unable to provide their own fire protection and imposes an assessment to cover these costs.

Owners of multiple parcels of forest land located within the same county may apply to DNR for a refund of a portion of the fire protection assessment paid. These owners may submit to DNR a single application listing the parcels owned. The county must bill the forest fire protection assessment on the one parcel identified by the department for collection of the assessment.

Property owners with the following number of parcels may apply for a single assessment in the year indicated:

Year Number of Parcels

2004 6 or more parcels

2005 4 or more parcels

2006 and thereafter 2 or more parcels

Summary of Bill: Property owners with six or more parcels may apply for a single assessment in 2004 and thereafter. Owners of fewer than six parcels may not seek a single assessment.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 29, 2004.

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

Testimony For: The underlying policy of allowing owners of multiple parcels to combine them for purposes of a single assessment was a good idea when passed. However the escalation in the number of landowners who could avail themselves of the process, beginning in 2005-06, will cause a financial burden on DNR and the county assessors' offices.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Jack Westerman, Jefferson Co. Assessor (pro); Dianne Dorey, Lewis Co. Assessor (pro); Dwayne Sommers, Spokane Co. Assessor (pro).