

SENATE BILL REPORT

SJM 8002

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Natural Resources, Energy & Water, January 29, 2003

Brief Description: Requesting forest health-related management activities on all state and national forests in Washington state.

Sponsors: Senators Morton, Hewitt, Sheahan, Stevens, Parlette, Mulliken, Oke and Roach.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Natural Resources, Energy & Water: 1/23/03, 1/29/03 [DPS].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES, ENERGY & WATER

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Joint Memorial No. 8002 be substituted therefor, and the substitute joint memorial do pass.

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

Staff: Vic Moon (786-7469)

Background: Numerous studies have found that many American forests are under stress. The problem includes forest weeds, tree disease, overly dense forest areas and species growing in areas where they have not traditionally grown. The resulting problems from forest diseases include risk of wildfire and loss of habitat for wildlife. Continuing threats from the introduction and spread of non-native pests and plants, extreme weather events and climatic flux, and changes in forest conditions due to both man and nature are placing American forests at risk. This includes both those forests that are managed for timber production and those that are managed for multiple uses and for wilderness preservation.

Summary of Substitute Bill: Recognizing the risks of fire and the problems of forest health, the Legislature requests that health-related management activities on all forest lands be accelerated in order to reduce the effects of catastrophic wildfire and loss of wildlife and recreation opportunities. The Forest Service is asked to review the effectiveness of its current firefighting procedures and to ensure that the most effective firefighting methods are used. The memorial supports the federal management activities to reduce the risk of the further spread of insects and diseases to state forest lands and to private lands adjacent to federal lands.

The Forest Service is encouraged to focus on management activities on federal lands adjacent to private lands and then to request from Congress the authority to use revenue generated from harvest activities to fund ecosystem restoration and reforestation. The Forest Service is encouraged to consider current market conditions and the economic viability of timber sales when choosing harvest methods and to encourage innovative and efficient logging techniques to ensure adequate protection of fish, wildlife and water quality. Federal, state and local agencies are asked to work together to streamline the process to jointly address forest health

issues. Congress is asked to provide adequate funding for the United States Forest Service and continually assess the Forest Service's progress towards a healthy forest environment.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The substitute makes a distinction between insects and disease and clarifies fire issues.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Testimony For: Public forests need to be managed to minimize the risks of wildfire and to protect forest economic and environmental benefits. Congress, the Forest Service and the state need to work together to reduce insects, disease and restore our forests' health.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Sonny O'Neal, Doug Daoust, United States Forest Service; Bart Swanson, Northwest Ecosystem Alliance; Alan Holt, The Nature Conservancy; Marci Golde, Washington Environmental Council; Nancy Peckman, John Ehrenreich, Society of American Foresters; Bill Garvin, Cindy Mitchell, Washington Forest Protection Association; Steve Triect, Boise Cascade; Maurice Williamson, Vaagen Brothers Timber; Kevin Goddouf, Weyerhaeuser; Jim McCorlay, The Campbell Group; Robert Hemsler, Association of Pulp and Paper.