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**Natural Resources, Ecology &  
Parks Committee**

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**SB 5179**

**Brief Description:** Studying forest health issues.

**Sponsors:** Senators Morton, Jacobsen, Sheldon and Stevens.

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Directs the Forest Health Strategy Work Group to hold a minimum of five meetings at diverse locations throughout the state to gather public input regarding a legislative proposal developed by the work group.

**Hearing Date:** 3/17/05

**Staff:** Jason Callahan (786-7117).

**Background:**

The Forest Health Strategy Work Group (work group) was created by the Legislature in 2004, and assigned the task of submitting their findings and recommendations to the Legislature by December 30, 2004.

The legislation that created the work group asked its members to study opportunities to improve various forest health issues facing the state. This charge included formulating recommendations for certain issues, such as the proper incentives for helping landowners maintain healthy forests, alternatives for funding, amendments to the current forest health laws, and reviewing the current legal structure for noxious weeds to decide if it is an attractive model to use in the forest environment. Finally, the work group was asked to recommend whether their existence should continue into the future.

The work group was comprised of fourteen members of diverse backgrounds. Among others, the work group was served by representatives of the Department of Natural Resources, the United States Forest Service, academic experts, private foresters, tribal interests, and small forest landowners. Most of the members were appointed by the Commissioner of Public Lands, and the Department of Natural Resources provided staff support.

The work group completed its task on time and delivered the written report to the Legislature. Unless further legislative action is taken, the work group will cease to exist on June 30th of this year.

**Summary of Bill:**

The expiration date for the work group is extended from June 30, 2005 until June 30, 2006, and the work group is directed to hold a minimum of five meetings at diverse locations throughout the state to gather public input regarding a legislative proposal developed by the work group.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

**Effective Date:** The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.