

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5618

As of February 16, 2005

Title: An act relating to designating forest lands of long-term commercial significance.

Brief Description: Clarifying the process for designation of forest lands of long-term commercial significance.

Sponsors: Senators Kline, Pridemore, Kastama, Poulsen, Rockefeller, Fairley and Kohl-Welles.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Natural Resources, Ocean & Recreation: 2/16/05.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES, OCEAN & RECREATION

Staff: Curt Gavigan (786-7437)

Background: The Growth Management Act (GMA) states that comprehensive plans and development regulations should seek to maintain and enhance natural resource based industries, including the timber industry. Comprehensive plans and development regulations should also encourage the conservation of productive forest lands.

Forest land is defined, for purposes of the GMA, as land primarily devoted to growing trees for long term commercial timber production on land that can be economically and practically managed for such production. In determining whether land meets this definition, the following factors must be considered: proximity to urban, suburban, and rural settlements; surrounding parcel size and compatibility; long term economic conditions; and the availability of services conducive to conversion of forest land to other uses.

Under the GMA, local governments must adopt regulations assuring that the use of lands adjacent to agricultural, forest, or mineral resource lands does not interfere with the continued use of these designated lands for the production of food, agricultural products, timber, or for the extraction of minerals.

Summary of Bill: The purpose of designating lands as forest lands of long term commercial significance is to maintenance the land base required for the forest products industry and derive the economic, social, and environmental benefits that result from a viable forest products industry.

Access to markets may be considered by local governments when taking designation actions regarding forest lands. However, such decisions may not be predicated on a lack of forest products processing facilities in a city or county.

Local governments may require designated forest lands to be part of an area or tract of forest land. However, the area or tract required may not be larger than those typically used for the growing or harvesting of forest products on private lands within the county.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Testimony For: This revision to the GMA would not take away the authority of the counties, but would give them added criteria for making listing decisions. The bill would encourage the increased designation of forest lands, which would in turn help protect forests from encroachment.

Testimony Against: The bill is set forth in a confusing manner and its interpretation could jeopardize counties who wish to undesignate forest lands for economic reasons. The current GMA and forest practice rules cover the issue of designation thoroughly, making this legislation unnecessary.

Who Testified: PRO: Senator Kline, prime sponsor; Genessee Atkins, Futurewise; Paul Parker, Washington State Association of Counties. OTHER: Pat McElroy, Department of Natural Resources; Bill Garvin, Washington Forest Protection Association.

CON: John Stuhlmiller, Farm Bureau.