

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 5461

As Reported by House Committee On:
Agriculture & Natural Resources

Title: An act relating to continuing the use of contract harvesting for improving forest health on Washington state trust lands.

Brief Description: Improving forest health on state trust lands by continuing the use of contract harvesting for silvicultural treatments.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Natural Resources, Ocean & Recreation (originally sponsored by Senators Morton, Jacobsen, Fraser, Hatfield, Hargrove, Benton, Sheldon and Rasmussen; by request of Department of Natural Resources).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Agriculture & Natural Resources: 3/19/07, 3/22/07 [DP].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Eliminates the expiration date for contract harvesting on state trust lands with identified forest health deficiencies.
- Requires the Department of Natural Resources to prioritize certain silvicultural treatments according to the protection of public health and safety, public resources, and the long-term asset value of the trust.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 14 members: Representatives B. Sullivan, Chair; Blake, Vice Chair; Kretz, Ranking Minority Member; Warnick, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Dickerson, Eickmeyer, Grant, Hailey, Kagi, Lantz, McCoy, Newhouse, Orcutt and Strow.

Staff: Jaclyn Ford (786-7339).

Background:

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has the authority to directly contract for the removal of timber on state forest lands. The DNR contracts with a firm or individual to perform all the necessary harvesting work to process trees into logs; the DNR then sells the individual log sorts. The contract harvesting program may not be more than 10 percent of the total annual volume of timber offered for sale by the DNR. However, all contract harvesting operations that are conducted primarily for forest health are exempt from the annual 10 percent cap on contract harvesting sales.

Where there are identified health deficiencies in areas of state forest land, the DNR has authority to use contract harvesting or conduct other silvicultural treatments. All harvesting and treatments must be intended to improve the health of the forest stand, and must be in accordance with all applicable forest health plans, laws, and other agreements. The DNR must also give priority to fulfilling existing forest plans when planning harvesting or other silvicultural treatments.

Authority to use the contract harvesting program for silvicultural treatment expires on December 31, 2007.

Summary of Bill:

The December 31, 2007 expiration date is eliminated, allowing the DNR to continue to contract harvest for silvicultural treatments that improve forest on state trust lands.

The DNR is required to prioritize silvicultural treatments that assist in meeting forest health strategies included in management and landscape plans. If no plan exists, the DNR will give higher priority to silvicultural treatments that benefit the protection of public health and safety, public resources, and the long-term asset value of the trust.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) Contract harvesting for silvicultural treatments that improve forest health is a successful program. All interested parties win in this program, and Washington wins too.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Senator Morton, prime sponsor; Bob Dick, American Forest Resource Council; Bill Pickell, Washington Loggers; Tim Boyd, Vaagen Brothers and Boise Cascade; and Bruce Mackey, Department of Natural Resources.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.