

SENATE BILL REPORT

ESHB 2468

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Natural Resources, Ocean & Recreation, February 28, 2008

Title: An act relating to improving community and urban forest conditions in Washington state.

Brief Description: Authorizing the department of natural resources to establish an inventory, conduct an assessment, and develop recommendations to improve community and urban forest conditions in Washington state.

Sponsors: House Committee on Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representatives VanDeWege, Warnick, Blake, Dickerson, Linville, Upthegrove, McCoy, Hinkle, Appleton, Lantz, Ormsby, McIntire, Roberts, Kenney, Hudgins, Loomis, Kretz, Kagi and Chase; by request of Department of Natural Resources).

Brief History: Passed House: 2/18/08, 94-1.

Committee Activity: Natural Resources, Ocean & Recreation: 2/25/08, 2/28/08 [DP-WM, w/oRec].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES, OCEAN & RECREATION

Majority Report: Do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Jacobsen, Chair; Hatfield, Vice Chair; Morton, Ranking Minority Member; Fraser, Hargrove, Rockefeller, Spanel and Swecker.

Minority Report: That it be referred without recommendation.

Signed by Senator Stevens.

Staff: Sherry McNamara (786-7402)

Background: In 1991 the Legislature established the Community and Urban Forestry Program (program) within the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), which is funded with federal grants. The term "community and urban forests" is currently defined in statute as land in and around human settlements ranging from small communities to metropolitan areas that does, or could potentially, support trees.

The program may provide technical, financial, and educational assistance to municipalities and counties to encourage proper tree management and care. DNR may enter into agreements with nonprofit organizations to further public education and support for urban tree planting.

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.

Funding for the program can be received by DNR from the federal government or by gifts and grants. DNR may also charge fees for attendance at workshops and conferences and for any publications or materials that the program prepares for distribution.

Summary of Bill: The authority for DNR to conduct a community and urban forestry program is changed from discretionary to mandatory.

DNR must conduct a prioritized statewide inventory of community and urban forests. In the development of the inventory, DNR must use existing data and current inventory technologies. The criteria for the inventory must support the planning needs of local government and be compatible with existing and developing urban forest protocols for access to carbon markets.

DNR must conduct an urban forest assessment and develop recommendations to the Legislature. The inventory and assessment must support the adoption and implementation of urban forest management plans and ordinances developed by local governments.

The criteria and implementation plan for the inventory and assessment must be completed by December 1, 2008. The initial inventory and assessment must consist of two counties, one east and one west of the Cascades, and be completed by June 1, 2010.

The Commissioner must appoint a technical advisory committee (committee) to provide advice during the development of the criteria and implementation plan for the statewide inventory and assessment. The Commissioner must appoint various professionals, including but not limited to arborists, educators, and researchers as members of the committee.

The program should facilitate cooperation with public works and utilities department vegetation management programs to prevent vegetation interfering with or damaging public facilities and utilities.

The bill contains a null and void clause.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Engrossed Substitute Bill: PRO: This bill helps increase the resources needed to complete inventories and assessments of our state's community and urban forests. It is a critical first step in gathering data about our urban forests. From the data, we can learn how to address issues and conditions that might exist for our urban forests. The data will assist us in determining where there might be opportunities for tree planting. Protecting and growing our community and urban forests is a priority.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Vicki Christiansen, DNR; Debra Munguia, Washington Forest Protection Association.