

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5966

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As Reported By Senate Committee On:  
Natural Resources, Ocean & Recreation, February 22, 2007

**Title:** An act relating to preparing a response to the consequences of climate change on the forests of the state.

**Brief Description:** Preparing a response to the consequences of climate change on the forests of the state.

**Sponsors:** Senators Swecker, Jacobsen, Morton, Hargrove, Shin and Kline.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Natural Resources, Ocean & Recreation: 2/19/07, 2/22/07 [DPS-WM].

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES, OCEAN & RECREATION

**Majority Report:** That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5966 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

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

**Staff:** Curt Gavigan (786-7437)

**Background:** According to information from the Forest Health Work Group, which was first convened in 2004, Washington State contains approximately 21 million acres of forestland. By 2005, over 2.5 million of those forested acres contained elevated levels of tree mortality, defoliation, or foliage disease. The western spruce budworm and bark beetle have caused significant tree damage in the state.

An October 2006 preliminary report from the Future of Washington's Forests study, produced by the Department of Natural Resources and the University of Washington, found that forest fire and insect outbreaks in Eastern Washington are occurring outside of their historic range of variability. The study states that the per acre tree mortality of ponderosa and lodgepole pine on acres affected by mountain pine beetle increased from 2.2 for 1979 to 1999 to 8.4 for 2000 to 2004. On state and private forestland, the study estimates that, of the total lodgepole pine mortality in the past 25 years, 72 percent has occurred within the last five years.

**Summary of Bill:** The Department of Natural Resources must contract with the University of Washington College of Forest Resources to, in summary, conduct the following activities:

- identify cost-effective treatments for reducing the risk of climate change and restoring forest health;

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- implement outreach activities concerning the risks of not responding to changing climatic conditions and the benefits of various treatment options;
- develop methods by which entities can directly assess the costs associated with different management options;
- analyze cost accounting methods to demonstrate where savings are accumulated and where investments are most needed to restore forest health;
- support programs that assess the feasibility of converting underutilized biomass into products and energy; and
- conduct a pilot program using remote sensing data to rapidly track forest health changes and provide information for planning ground treatments.

**EFFECT OF CHANGES MADE BY RECOMMENDED SUBSTITUTE AS PASSED COMMITTEE (Natural Resources, Ocean & Recreation):** The University of Washington College of Forest Resources is directed to conduct the research and activities mandated in the bill, removing the requirement for a contract with the Department of Natural Resources. The College of Forest Resources is directed to work cooperatively and share information and findings with the Department of Natural Resources. The appropriation contained in the bill is made to the University of Washington instead of the Department of Natural Resources.

**Appropriation:** \$1 million General Fund-State.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on February 15, 2007.

**Committee/Commission/Task Force Created:** No.

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

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:** PRO: The work elements from this bill flow out of the results of the Future of Washington's Forests study. There are issues regarding climate change and forest health that need further research. This bill would allow continued cooperation between the University of Washington and DNR. This bill will help address a major issue that threatens the state's working forest land base.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Bruce Bare, Bruce Lippke, University of Washington; Craig Partridge, DNR; Tim Boyd, Port Blakely, Vaagen Bros. & Boise.