

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 6233

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As of February 4, 2008

**Title:** An act relating to maintaining Washington's working forest land base.

**Brief Description:** Maintaining Washington's working forest land base.

**Sponsors:** Senator Jacobsen.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Natural Resources, Ocean & Recreation: 1/30/08.

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

**Staff:** Sherry McNamara (786-7402)

**Background:** Washington State's total land area consists of approximately 42.5 million acres. Approximately half of the state land is forested. Federal, state, and local forest land in Washington totals about 57 percent of its forested acres.

According to data from the *Future of Washington's Forests* study by the University of Washington and the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), the forestry and wood products manufacturing sectors provided over 45,000 jobs, generated \$16 billion in gross business revenue, and paid over \$2 billion in wages in 2005. This sector supported almost 1.5 percent of jobs in the state and about 3.2 percent of its gross business income.

One of the issues explored in the *Future of Washington's Forests* study addresses the maintenance of Washington's working forest land base. The study identifies several potential incentives for maintaining working forest lands, including direct payments to landowners for enhancing conservation of their lands, regulatory relief, tax relief, technical assistance, and marketing opportunities such as ecosystem services.

**Summary of Bill:** The Working Forest Land Board (Board) is created. The Board is composed of five members:

- the Commissioner of Public Lands, or the Commissioner's designee;
- the Dean of the University of Washington College of Forest Resources, or the Dean's designee;
- the Dean of the Washington State University College of Agriculture, Human and Natural Resource Sciences, or the Dean's designee; and
- two appointments by the Governor, one each representing forest landowners and conservation interests.

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*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 Board is responsible for operating a grant and loan program for the protection of working forest lands. The Board may enter into contracts, make rules, and accept funds to carry out its duties. In awarding funds to promote the preservation of working forest lands, the Board must look at projects and activities that include, but are not limited to:

- sustaining the working forest land base and strengthening the connection between economic health and conservation of forests, such as providing carbon sequestration, production of wood-based biomass energy, benefits for habitats, biodiversity, and watershed functions;
- preserving forest lands over the long term for working forestry, such as land exchanges and transfer of development rights programs; and
- planning, research, and policy development related to maintaining working forests as well as for long-term sustainable supplies of timber products.

In order to fund as many projects and activities as possible, the Board must establish goals to encourage loan applications to maximize the amount of funds awarded in the form of low-interest loans. Only local governments are eligible for low-interest loans awarded by the Board.

The Board must adopt guidelines regarding matching funds and the amount of funds that may be used for administrative purposes. The DNR must provide staff support to the Board.

A non-appropriated revolving fund is created to accept appropriations and other funds, including loan repayments, directed to the Board. The Board may use the account to provide grants and loans.

**Appropriation:** \$10,000,000.

**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:** PRO: This bill helps us by looking at market-based approaches and incentives to keep our forest industry competitive. Identifying economic values that provide sustainability to the forest industry is vital. Wood products should be accounted for when looking at providing carbon credits for storing carbon. Washington's forests have provided environmental, ecological, and social value. Our citizens benefit daily from forests and forest products. This bill is a great idea to get discussions going to protect our working forests. The board created in this bill is similar to the Salmon Recovery Fund Board, but it is unclear who the grant recipients are, and what activities might be considered for funding.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Senator Jacobsen, prime sponsor; Mark Doumit, Washington Forest Protection Association; Craig Partridge, Department of Natural Resources; Kevin Raymond, Pacific Forest Trust; Bill Robinson, The Nature Conservancy.