

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 6249

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As of January 17, 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:** Senators Fraser, Morton, Jacobsen, Swecker and Rockefeller; by request of Department of Natural Resources.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Natural Resources, Ocean & Recreation: 1/16/08.

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

**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 non-profit organizations to further public education and support for urban tree planting.

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. Definitions are added for the terms "community and urban forest assessment" and "community and urban forest inventory."

The Commissioner of Public Lands is required to appoint a technical advisory committee to advise the development of uniform criteria for a statewide community and urban forest inventory and assessment.

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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.*

In collaboration with municipalities and a statewide organization representing urban and community forests, DNR is directed to develop an implementation plan for the inventory and assessment of community and urban forests.

In collaboration with educational institutions, municipalities, corporations, state and national service organizations, and environmental organizations, DNR is required to conduct a statewide inventory of community and urban forests.

In collaboration with a statewide organization representing urban and community forestry programs, DNR is required to conduct an urban forest assessment. Recommendations to improve community and urban forestry are to be provided to the Legislature. The Commissioner of Public Lands is required to report annually to the Legislature beginning January 1, 2009.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on January 8, 2008.

**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 Urban and Community Forest Program will be expanded to compile existing information into a uniform system statewide. It will provide cities with an inventory and assessment to improve and maintain urban forests. Currently, there is very little information on the condition of urban forests. Establishing a comprehensive and standardized inventory of the state's urban forests is a necessary and logical first step. Over the last 35 years over 800,000 acres of forest have been lost. Forests are important in providing good air quality and curbing storm water runoff and pollution. Good management begins with the very important first step of inventory and assessment.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Mark Gray, Sarah Griffith, DNR; Heath Packard, Audubon Society; Dave Williams, Association of Washington Cities; Jim Armstrong, Spokane County Conservation District.