
**Agriculture & Natural Resources
Committee**

HB 1711

Brief Description: Prioritizing lands to receive forest health treatments.

Sponsors: Representatives Kretz, Springer, Pettigrew, Schmick, Short and Condotta.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Directs the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to develop and implement a policy for prioritizing forest health treatments to protect public lands against wildfire.
- Directs the DNR to develop a prioritized list of parcels of state land that would benefit most from forest health treatments during the following six years.
- Directs that expenditures from the Resource Management Cost Account for the purpose of conducting forest health treatments must be made consistent with the DNR's prioritization policy and prioritized list.

Hearing Date: 2/9/17

Staff: Robert Hatfield (786-7117).

Background:

Department of Natural Resources—Introduction.

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) manages a number of different categories of land, each for a specific purpose and under different management requirements. These include approximately 3 million acres of federally granted lands and state forest lands, which the DNR manages to support common schools, counties, and other public institutions.

The DNR has the direct charge and responsibility over all matters pertaining to forest fire services in the state. The forest fire-related duties of the DNR include enforcing all forest fire-related laws, investigating the cause of forest fires, and accepting the empowerment to direct all fire suppression efforts.

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.

Resource Management Cost Account.

The Resource Management Cost Account within the State Treasury is used for the purpose of defraying costs incurred by the DNR in managing and administering state lands and state aquatic lands.

Summary of Bill:

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is directed to develop and implement a policy for prioritizing forest health treatments to protect public lands against wildfire. Forest health treatments are defined as actions taken by the DNR, including prescribed burning or mechanical treatments, to restore the condition of a forest to one that can meet landowner objectives, is sound in ecological function, is capable of sustainable management, and is resilient to disturbance.

The prioritization policy must encompass treatments whose primary purpose is to reduce wildfire hazards, as well as treatments that also achieve other forest health and financial sustainability goals.

The DNR's prioritization of parcels to be treated must place primary emphasis on the rate of return that the DNR estimates the treatment will achieve. Factors for the DNR to consider in its estimate include:

- timber or other commercial products removed during any mechanical treatments;
- timber or other commercial products likely to be spared from damage from wildfire;
- homes, structures, agricultural products, and public infrastructure likely to be spared from damage by wildfire;
- impacts to recreation and tourism; and
- ecosystem services such as water quality, air quality, or carbon sequestration.

The DNR must develop a prioritized list of parcels of state land that would benefit most from forest health treatments during the following six years. In developing its prioritized list, the DNR must consider land management plans activities of nearby landowners. The DNR may place non-state owned lands on the prioritized list, provided that the treatment of such lands along with the treatment of state lands will produce superior landscape-scale benefits to state lands. The DNR must submit its prioritized list to the Legislature no later than December 1 of each even-numbered year.

Beginning December 1, 2020, and every two years thereafter, the DNR must include with its prioritized list a brief report summarizing the DNR's progress toward treating the parcels on the list.

With certain specified exceptions, expenditures by the DNR on forest health treatments must be consistent with the DNR's prioritization policy for forest health treatments.

Expenditures by the DNR from the Resource Management Cost Account for the purpose of conducting forest health treatments must be consistent with the DNR's prioritization policy and prioritized list.

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Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 3, 2017.

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