
**Rural Development, Agriculture, &
Natural Resources Committee**

HB 1784

Brief Description: Concerning wildfire prevention.

Sponsors: Representatives Kretz, Blake and Shea.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Directs the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to annually establish wildfire fuel breaks across public lands, subject to certain requirements.
- Expands the scope of the DNR's forest health treatment policy to include identifying, configuring, and establishing wildfire fuel breaks across the landscape.

Hearing Date: 2/13/19

Staff: Robert Hatfield (786-7117).

Background:

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 forestlands, 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 directing all fire suppression efforts on DNR-protected lands.

The DNR is directed, to the extent feasible given all applicable trust responsibilities and subject to the availability of appropriated funds, to: develop and implement a policy for prioritizing

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forest health treatments in order to protect state lands and state forestlands; reduce wildfire losses, insect infestation, and disease; and improve forest health at a landscape scale.

Summary of Bill:

A "wildfire fuel break" is defined as a natural or constructed barrier used to stop or check wildfires that may occur or to provide a control line from which to work.

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is required to annually establish wildfire fuel breaks across public lands, and to do so in coordination with abutting landowners wherever practicable. The wildfire fuel breaks should optimize the use of natural features, provide large areas of coverage, and be positioned to minimize the spread of wildfire across various landholdings.

The scope of the policy that the DNR is directed to adopt, for the purpose of prioritizing investments on forest health treatments in order to reduce wildfire hazards, is expanded to include identifying, configuring, and establishing wildfire fuel breaks across the landscape. The wildfire fuel breaks identified in the policy should optimize use of natural features, provide large areas of coverage, and be positioned to minimize the spread of wildfire across various landholdings.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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