

SENATE BILL REPORT

2SHB 1784

As of March 27, 2019

Title: An act relating to wildfire prevention.

Brief Description: Concerning wildfire prevention.

Sponsors: House Committee on Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representatives Kretz, Blake and Shea).

Brief History: Passed House: 3/13/19, 96-0.

Committee Activity: Agriculture, Water, Natural Resources & Parks: 3/26/19.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Directs the Department of Natural Resources to prioritize forest health treatments that serve the dual benefits of forest health maximization and strategic wildfire response.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, WATER, NATURAL RESOURCES & PARKS

Staff: Jeff Olsen (786-7428)

Background: The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has the responsibility over all matters pertaining to forest fire services in the state. The forest fire-related duties of DNR include enforcing all forest fire-related laws, investigating the cause of forest fires, and directing all fire suppression efforts on DNR-protected lands.

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 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: DNR is directed to prioritize, to the maximum extent practicable, forest health treatments that are strategically planned to serve the dual benefits of forest health maximization while providing geographically planned tools for wildfire response.

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.

DNR shall attempt to locate and design forest health treatments to provide wildfire personnel with strategically located treated areas to assist with managing fire response. DNR is required, in the context of its wildfire response obligations, to be familiar with areas where forest health treatments were undertaken on state, private, and federal land. In addition, DNR shall be familiar with public general transportation roads, public and private logging roads, bodies of water, and other features on the landscape relevant in planning a fire response. DNR must include these geographic features on a geographic information system for use by fire response personnel to assist in response decision making.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: During the 2015 wildfire season, 500,000 acres of forestlands were on fire. If forest thinning is done strategically, it can assist fire responders in controlling the spread of wildfires, saving forestland and habitat. California has used this strategy and it has prevented fires from spreading even further. This bill is consistent with the state's forest health and wildfire strategic plans. Wildfire reduction is often cited as a reason for making forest health investments, but this bill draws a more direct line between forest health and wildfires.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Joel Kretz, Prime Sponsor; Jason Callahan, Washington Forest Protection Association; Loren Torgerson, DNR.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.