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

HB 1216

Brief Description: Concerning urban and community forestry.

Sponsors: Representatives Ramos, Callan, Lekanoff, Fitzgibbon, Kloba, Ortiz-Self, Ormsby, Hackney and Ramel; by request of Department of Natural Resources.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Changes the name of the Community and Urban Forestry Program administered by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to the Urban and Community Forestry Program.
- Directs the DNR to conduct analyses of the needs and opportunities related to urban forestry in Washington.
- Directs the DNR to provide technical assistance and capacity building resources and opportunities in order to promote urban and community forestry.

Hearing Date: 1/26/21

Staff: Rebecca Lewis (786-7339).

Background:

Community and Urban Forestry.

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has authority to establish a Community and Urban Forestry Program (Program). Community and urban forests are identified as land within human settlements that does, or could, support trees. The Program may include assistance to local

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governments to encourage proper tree maintenance, policy and program coordination assistance, and the provision of surplus equipment to local governments to aid urban forestry programs.

As a part of the Program, the DNR may enter into agreements with nonprofit tree planting organizations and other entities with interests related to urban forestry. Funding can be received by the DNR from the federal government or by gifts and grants, and the DNR may charge fees for workshops and material distribution. Once received, the DNR utilizes the funding for the purposes of promoting urban and community forestry in the state.

Statewide Inventory of Community and Urban Forests.

In 2008 the Legislature directed the DNR to conduct a statewide inventory of community and urban forests, to conduct an urban forest assessment, and to develop an implementation plan for the inventory and assessment of community and urban forests. The initial assessment and inventory was required to be completed by no later than June 1, 2010.

Evergreen Communities Recognition Program.

Every city and county in the state has the discretionary authority to pursue recognition as an Evergreen Community. There can be multiple gradations of Evergreen Communities, and the Department of Commerce is responsible for identifying the criteria necessary for each gradation. Criteria for becoming an Evergreen Community includes developing a community forestry program, recognizing Arbor Day, and completing a forest inventory. The application process for becoming an Evergreen Community is managed through the existing DNR Tree City, U.S.A. Recognition Program.

Summary of Bill:

Urban and Community Forestry Program.

The name of the program administered by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is changed from the "Community and Urban Forestry Program" to the "Urban and Community Forestry Program." The scope of lands on which planting trees is encouraged as part of the Urban and Community Forestry Program is expanded to include tribal lands, and the purposes of the Urban and Community Forestry Program are expanded to include improved human health and the recovery of salmon and orcas. Several definitions are either modified or added to the Urban and Community Forestry Program law, including "highly impacted community," "urban and community forest," and "vulnerable populations."

Urban Forestry.

Prioritization.

The DNR must identify priority regions for the implementation of urban forestry programs.

Priority must be determined through the use and review of certain analyses and tools. These tools include:

- health disparity mapping tools that identify highly impacted communities such as the Department of Health's Washington tracking network; and
- salmon and orca recovery data including, but not limited to, the Puget Sound Partnership action agenda and other regional and statewide salmon and orca recovery plans and efforts, to target program delivery in areas where there are significant opportunities related to salmon and orca habitat and health.

Analysis of Needs and Opportunities.

The DNR must conduct analyses of the needs and opportunities related to urban forestry in Washington by assessing tree canopy cover and urban forestry inventory data. The DNR must also conduct a statewide inventory of urban and community forests using urban forest inventory and assessment protocols established by the United States Forest Service to produce statistically relevant estimates of the quantity, health, composition, and benefits of urban trees and forests. Inventory data must be maintained and periodically updated.

Technical Assistance.

The DNR must provide technical assistance and capacity building resources and opportunities to cities, counties, federally recognized tribes, and other public and private entities in the development and coordination of policies, programs, and activities for the promotion of urban and community forestry. The DNR must strive to enable urban forest managers to access carbon markets by working to ensure tools developed under this section are compatible with existing and developing urban forest carbon market reporting protocols.

Management Plans.

The DNR may use existing tools to assist communities to develop urban forestry management plans. Management plans may include, among other elements:

- maximizing vegetated stormwater management with trees and other vegetation that reduces runoff, increases soil infiltration, and reduces stormwater pollution;
- environmental health goals specific to air quality, habitat for wildlife, and energy conservation;
- integrating disease and pest management; and
- maximizing building heating and cooling energy efficiency through appropriate siting of trees for summer shading, passive solar heating in winter, and for wind breaks.

Ordinances.

The DNR may use existing tools to assist communities to develop urban forestry ordinances. Ordinances may address elements including:

- tree canopy cover, density, and spacing;

- appropriate tree siting and maintenance for vegetation management practices and programs to prevent vegetation from interfering with or damaging utilities and public facilities;
- tree and vegetation buffers for riparian areas, critical areas, transportation and utility corridors, and commercial and residential areas; and
- variances to avoid conflicts with renewable solar energy infrastructure, passive solar building design, and locally grown produce.

The DNR must encourage communities to include participation and input by vulnerable populations through community organizations and members of the public for urban and community forestry plans in the regions where they are based.

Evergreen Communities.

Statutes governing the Evergreen Communities Program are moved from Title 35, governing cities, to Title 76, governing the DNR.

Miscellaneous references in the Revised Code of Washington to "Evergreen Communities" are changed to references to "urban forestry."

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 18, 2021.

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