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**SUBSTITUTE SENATE BILL 6281**

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**State of Washington**

**68th Legislature**

**2024 Regular Session**

**By** Senate Agriculture, Water, Natural Resources & Parks (originally sponsored by Senators Van De Wege, Warnick, Dozier, Mullet, and Short)

READ FIRST TIME 01/30/24.

1 AN ACT Relating to investing in reforestation efforts following  
2 landscape-scale forest disturbances; adding a new section to chapter  
3 76.14 RCW; creating a new section; and making appropriations.

4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** (1) Due to the changing climate,  
6 catastrophic wildfires are on the increase in the state's forests  
7 causing the release of carbon stored in the trees, soils, and other  
8 biomass. Climate-informed reforestation for landscape resilience is  
9 vital to growing more resilient forests that will help address the  
10 wildfire crisis, sequester carbon, and enhance biodiversity and  
11 ecosystem services.

12 (2) Congress responded to the national need to address the  
13 impacts of catastrophic wildfires when it passed the repairing  
14 existing public land by adding necessary trees (REPLANT) act as part  
15 of the infrastructure and jobs act of 2021. The REPLANT act seeks to  
16 scale up reforestation across national forests over the next five  
17 years and begin an historically significant restoration effort on  
18 national forestlands.

19 (3) A similar state-based effort is needed to replant burned  
20 forestlands to increase forest health and resilience, mitigate  
21 postfire vulnerabilities, and restore the ability of these lands to

1 sequester carbon. The need is easily defined by the thousands of  
2 acres of forestlands that have been lost to wildfire during the past  
3 decade. Reforesting in the right place, at the right time, with the  
4 right species, and at appropriate scales can change the current  
5 trajectory. Reforestation of the state's burned forestlands is in the  
6 best interest of the state and consistent with Washington's efforts  
7 to combat climate change.

8 (4) The legislature recognizes the importance of providing  
9 additional funding for the postfire reforestation of public, private,  
10 and nonprofit forestland owners to expedite the replanting of burned  
11 forestlands and to restore the ability of these lands to sequester  
12 carbon.

13 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 76.14  
14 RCW to read as follows:

15 (1) Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this  
16 specific purpose, the department shall administer a reforestation  
17 grant program designed to incentivize and invest in climate-informed  
18 reforestation after large forest stand replacement events such as  
19 wildfire, landslides, volcanic eruptions, tsunamis, earthquakes, and  
20 other natural catastrophic events that damage the ecoservices of  
21 natural or managed forests.

22 (2) The department must establish criteria for the grant program  
23 allowing land preparation, sourcing of seedling, reforestation, and  
24 additional efforts to promote seedling survival, which must include:

25 (a) A cost-share percentage with the grant recipient not to  
26 exceed 25 percent of the grant award, including any in-kind  
27 contributions;

28 (b) Minimum and maximum potential grant awards;

29 (c) Applicant eligibility criteria that must include tribal  
30 ownerships, nonprofit landowners and managers, industrial and  
31 nonindustrial private forestland owners, local governments, and other  
32 state agencies and must exclude public lands owned by the federal  
33 government or, to avoid a conflict of interest, lands managed  
34 directly by the department. Applicants are not restricted regarding  
35 whether they direct funds in their proposal to a program of the  
36 department to execute their reforestation program of work, such as  
37 either conservation corps capacity or purchase of seedling supply, or  
38 both;

1 (d) The prioritization of funds for direct reforestation efforts  
2 and may be utilized to support aspects of the reforestation pipeline  
3 to ensure sustainability of the program;

4 (e) Ensuring the applicant's projects are not required by law;

5 (f) Specific considerations for grant applicants proposing to  
6 include, as part of the project, the reforestation of riparian  
7 buffers, potentially unstable slopes, or other areas where harvest is  
8 restricted due to state regulations that were affected by the  
9 underlying catastrophic event; and

10 (g) Consideration of any relevant environmental justice  
11 assessments under RCW 70A.02.060.

12 (3) The department must limit the overall size of the program  
13 required under this section to the level of appropriations provided  
14 specifically for this purpose.

15 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** The sum of \$10,000,000, or as much thereof  
16 as may be necessary, is appropriated from the natural climate  
17 solutions account created in RCW 70A.65.270 to the department of  
18 natural resources for the purposes of the reforestation grant program  
19 created in section 2 of this act.

20 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** (1) The legislature recognizes the ongoing  
21 need for the department of natural resources to respond to the  
22 impacts of wildfire on forestlands managed by the department.

23 (2) The sum of \$10,000,000, or as much thereof as may be  
24 necessary, is appropriated from the natural climate solutions account  
25 created in RCW 70A.65.270 to the department of natural resources for  
26 postfire reforestation of the forestlands managed by the department.  
27 The department of natural resources must prioritize expenditures for  
28 the benefit of state trust lands.

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