

---

**SENATE BILL 6281**

---

**State of Washington**

**68th Legislature**

**2024 Regular Session**

**By** Senators Van De Wege, Warnick, Dozier, Mullet, and Short

Read first time 01/19/24. Referred to Committee on Agriculture, Water, Natural Resources & Parks.

1 AN ACT Relating to investing in reforestation efforts following  
2 landscape-scale forest disturbances; amending RCW 70A.65.270; adding  
3 a new section to chapter 76.14 RCW; creating a new section; and  
4 making appropriations.

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

6 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** (1) Due to the changing climate,  
7 catastrophic wildfires are on the increase in the state's forests  
8 causing the release of carbon stored in the trees, soils, and other  
9 biomass. Climate-informed reforestation is vital to growing more  
10 resilient forests that will help address the wildfire crisis,  
11 sequester carbon, and enhance biodiversity and 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 postreforestation of public and private  
10 forestland owners to expedite the replanting of burned forestlands  
11 and to restore the ability of these lands to sequester carbon.

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

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

21 (2) The department must establish criteria for the grant program,  
22 which must include:

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

26 (b) Minimum and maximum potential grant awards;

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

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

1 (e) Priority scoring for reforestation investments on private  
2 forestland whose owners or managers are not required, by regulation  
3 or other mechanism, to replant after a catastrophic event;

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

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

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

14 **Sec. 3.** RCW 70A.65.270 and 2021 c 316 s 30 are each amended to  
15 read as follows:

16 (1) The natural climate solutions account is created in the state  
17 treasury. All moneys directed to the account from the climate  
18 investment account created in RCW 70A.65.250 must be deposited in the  
19 account. Moneys in the account may be spent only after appropriation.  
20 Moneys in the account are intended to increase the resilience of the  
21 state's waters, forests, and other vital ecosystems to the impacts of  
22 climate change, conserve working forestlands at risk of conversion,  
23 and increase their carbon pollution reduction capacity through  
24 sequestration, storage, and overall system integrity. Moneys in the  
25 account must be spent in a manner that is consistent with existing  
26 and future assessments of climate risks and resilience from the  
27 scientific community and expressed concerns of and impacts to  
28 overburdened communities.

29 (2) Moneys in the account may be allocated for the following  
30 purposes:

31 (a) Clean water investments that improve resilience from climate  
32 impacts. Funding under this subsection (2)(a) must be used to:

33 (i) Restore and protect estuaries, fisheries, and marine  
34 shoreline habitats and prepare for sea level rise including, but not  
35 limited to, making fish passage correction investments such as those  
36 identified in the cost-share barrier removal program for small  
37 forestland owners created in RCW 76.13.150 and those that are  
38 considered by the fish passage barrier removal board created in RCW  
39 77.95.160;

1 (ii) Increase carbon storage in the ocean or aquatic and coastal  
2 ecosystems;

3 (iii) Increase the ability to remediate and adapt to the impacts  
4 of ocean acidification;

5 (iv) Reduce flood risk and restore natural floodplain ecological  
6 function;

7 (v) Increase the sustainable supply of water and improve aquatic  
8 habitat, including groundwater mapping and modeling;

9 (vi) Improve infrastructure treating stormwater from previously  
10 developed areas within an urban growth boundary designated under  
11 chapter 36.70A RCW, with a preference given to projects that use  
12 green stormwater infrastructure;

13 (vii) Either preserve or increase, or both, carbon sequestration  
14 and storage benefits in forests, forested wetlands, agricultural  
15 soils, tidally influenced agricultural or grazing lands, or  
16 freshwater, saltwater, or brackish aquatic lands; or

17 (viii) Either preserve or establish, or both, carbon  
18 sequestration by protecting or planting trees in marine shorelines  
19 and freshwater riparian areas sufficient to promote climate  
20 resilience, protect cold water fisheries, and achieve water quality  
21 standards;

22 (b) Healthy forest investments to improve resilience from climate  
23 impacts. Funding under this subsection (2)(b) must be used for  
24 projects and activities that will:

25 (i) Increase forest and community resilience to wildfire in the  
26 face of increased seasonal temperatures and drought;

27 (ii) Improve forest health and reduce vulnerability to changes in  
28 hydrology, insect infestation, and other impacts of climate change;  
29 ((~~iii~~))

30 (iii) Incentivize and invest in climate-informed reforestation of  
31 lands affected by catastrophic natural disturbances such as funding  
32 the reforestation grant program created in section 2 of this act and  
33 funding reforestation efforts by the department of natural resources  
34 following wildfires; or

35 (iv) Prevent emissions by preserving natural and working lands  
36 from the threat of conversion to development or loss of critical  
37 habitat, through actions that include, but are not limited to, the  
38 creation of new conservation lands, community forests, or increased  
39 support to small forestland owners through assistance programs  
40 including, but not limited to, the forest riparian easement program

1 and the family forest fish passage program. It is the intent of the  
2 legislature that not less than \$10,000,000 be expended each biennium  
3 for the forestry riparian easement program created in chapter 76.13  
4 RCW or for riparian easement projects funded under the agricultural  
5 conservation easements program established under RCW 89.08.530, or  
6 similar riparian enhancement programs.

7 (3) Moneys in the account may not be used for projects that would  
8 violate tribal treaty rights or result in significant long-term  
9 damage to critical habitat or ecological functions. Investments from  
10 this account must result in long-term environmental benefits and  
11 increased resilience to the impacts of climate change.

12 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** The sum of \$10,000,000, or as much thereof  
13 as may be necessary, is appropriated for the fiscal year ending June  
14 30, 2024, from the natural climate solutions account created in RCW  
15 70A.65.270 to the department of natural resources for the purposes of  
16 the reforestation grant program created in section 2 of this act.

17 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 5.** (1) The legislature recognizes the ongoing  
18 need for the department of natural resources to respond to the  
19 impacts of wildfire on forestlands managed by the department.

20 (2) The sum of \$10,000,000, or as much thereof as may be  
21 necessary, is appropriated for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2025,  
22 from the natural climate solutions account created in RCW 70A.65.270  
23 to the department of natural resources for postfire reforestation of  
24 the forestlands managed by the department. The department of natural  
25 resources must prioritize expenditures for the benefit of state trust  
26 lands.

--- END ---