

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SHB 2104

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As Reported By Senate Committee On:  
Ways & Means, April 18, 2001

**Title:** An act relating to funding for forest fire protection.

**Brief Description:** Providing for an increase in forest fire protection funds.

**Sponsors:** By House Committee on Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representatives Rockefeller (co-prime sponsor), Sump (co-prime sponsor), Pearson and Doumit).

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Ways & Means: 4/18/01 [DP].

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

**Majority Report:** Do pass.

Signed by Senators Brown, Chair; Constantine, Vice Chair; Fraser, Hewitt, Kline, Long, Parlette, Rasmussen, Regala, Rossi, Sheahan, B. Sheldon, Snyder, Spanel, Thibaudeau and Winsley.

**Staff:** Richard Ramsey (786-7412)

**Background:** Owners of forest land are required to adequately protect against the spread of fire from or onto their property during the fire season. The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) must provide fire protection for forest landowners who are unable to provide their own fire protection. DNR provides forest fire protection to much of the forest land in the state, and may contract out fire protection services with local governments.

DNR funds the cost of providing forest fire protection to forest landowners through forest protection assessments and state general fund appropriations. The annual forest protection assessment imposed on a forest landowner in a forest protection zone for each parcel of land is a flat assessment of \$14.50, plus 22 cents per acre for every acre over 50 acres.

A 1997 study by TriData of the state fire program for forest lands compared the amount of funding received for fire protection by fund source among several western states. This study found that Washington State contributes the smallest percentage of funds for fire protection from its state general fund, and the highest percentage of funds for fire protection from landowner assessments. This study considered it imperative that a more equitable split between the state general fund and landowner assessments be established for forest protection. Concerns were also raised in the study about the state's ability to provide adequate fire protection because of inadequate resources.

**Summary of Bill:** The Legislature declares its intent to equitably share the costs of fire protection between the forest fire protection assessment account and an equivalent state match.

The assessment for forest protection is increased for parcels of land that exceed 50 acres from a flat fee plus 22 cents per acre for every acre over 50 acres, to a flat fee plus 25 cents per acre for every acre over 50 acres. Enactment of the bill is contingent upon specific funding in the omnibus budget act and referencing the bill.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

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

**Testimony For:** None.

**Testimony Against:** None.

**Testified:** No one.