

REVENUE: No revenue impact

FISCAL: No fiscal impact

Action: Do Pass as Amended and Be Printed Engrossed

Vote: 4 - 0 - 1

Yeas: Atkinson, Beyer, Prozanski, Avakian

Nays: 0

Exc.: Bates

Prepared By: Sue Marshall, Administrator

Meeting Dates: 5/17, 5/29

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES: Creates a Stewardship Agreement Grant Fund. Continuously appropriates moneys to the State Board of Forestry to provide grants to carry out the purposes of stewardship agreements. Permits Flexible Incentives Account to be used to fund activities related to stewardship agreements. Allows the State Department of Agriculture and the State Board of Forestry to exempt landowners who exceed regulatory requirements from future changes to a specific rule. Permits the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Forestry to determine consistency of activities under stewardship agreement with the federal Endangered Species Act. Exempts land management plans of stewardship agreements from disclosure as public record unless the public interest requires disclosure in a particular instance.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Need for defined landowner incentives to encourage participation in Forest Stewardship Program
- Clarifying language of the amendment

EFFECT OF COMMITTEE AMENDMENT: Narrows language related to provision of increased regulatory certainty from the State Department of Agriculture or the State Board of Forestry for property owners who exceed regulatory requirements in exchange for possible exemption from future changes to a specific rule.

BACKGROUND: The Forest Stewardship Program was established to encourage landowners to exceed regulatory requirements in order to conserve, restore and improve water quality or fish and wildlife habitat. A forest stewardship plan defines a landowner's land management objectives, describes the current condition of natural resources on the property and provides a ten-year action plan to achieve the landowner's objectives while maintaining and enhancing the natural resources that are present. All actions to achieve a stewardship plan are voluntary. Landowners have expressed concern that the program lacks defined incentives.

House Bill 2114-B adds incentives to encourage participation in the Forest Stewardship Program. The bill defines methods to provide financial support to landowners entering into a stewardship agreement although without a current funding source. Additionally, the bill defines a benefit of regulatory certainty at both the state and federal level as an incentive to participate in voluntary stewardship agreements, re-creates a participant exemption to the requirement for individual written plans for operations conducted under the Forest Practices Act and provides a public records exemption for required stewardship plans.

5/31/2007 5:32:00 PM

This summary has not been adopted or officially endorsed by action of the committee.