



NEWS RELEASE

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Forest Practices Work Group Supports Habitat Purchases and Easements for Threatened and Endangered Species

Public, private, environmental and forest groups testify in favor of HB 1484

OLYMPIA – A special work group of public, private, environmental, and forestry interests appointed by the Washington State Forest Practices Board jointly testified in support of HB 1484 yesterday. The proposed bill would create a habitat open space program to purchase land or conservation easements for federally listed threatened and endangered species such as the northern spotted owl.

The legislation, co-sponsored by Representative Kevin Van De Wege (D-24th District), and four others, would expand a state program protecting forest streams to also include lands with habitat for federally listed endangered or threatened species. The measure is supported by a Forest Practices Board policy working group, which was established as part of a settlement of litigation over the northern spotted owl. This work group is collaboratively developing measures that will allow more non-federal lands in Washington to contribute to spotted owl conservation.

“Representative Van De Wege’s bill is a practical solution for protecting the northern spotted owl and other species because it offers private landowners tangible incentives to take voluntary action,” said Peter Goldmark, Public Lands Commissioner. As Commissioner, Goldmark chairs the Forest Practices Board, which sets rules for logging, road building, and other forest operations. He also leads the Washington State Department of Natural Resources, which would administer the new program.

Other groups represented on the policy work group testifying yesterday also gave their support for the measure, including:

Shawn Cantrell, Executive Director for Seattle Audubon: “We’ve come together to pursue a different approach than litigation and strife.”

Mark Doumit, Executive Director of the Washington Forest Protection Association: "This is landmark legislation. It starts to incentivize private landowners so landowners might see a benefit to having an endangered species on their land."

Bridget Moran, Environmental Policy Lead, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife: "The Department has long sought an avenue for incentives so threatened and endangered species would be an asset, not a liability."

Robert Meier, Manager for Rayonier: "I have been working on owl issues since the early 1990s, this collective vision in taking this action is a positive addition to our efforts of the past."

Nina Carter, Executive Director, Audubon Washington: "This is an amazing collection of people who are committed to a new way of doing business. A new day is dawning."

Rep. Brian Blake (D-19th District), Chair, House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee, and a co-sponsor of HB 1484, said yesterday it was an impressive work panel, and he encouraged the group to continue its efforts. Other sponsors of HB 1484 are: Rep. Ed Orcutt (R-18th District), Rep. Christopher Hurst (D-31st District), and Rep. John McCoy (D-38th District).

The Forest Practices Board Policy Working Group will make progress reports to the Forest Practices Board throughout the year. The group is scheduled to complete its work by November 2009.

DNR managing public lands

DNR manages millions of acres of state trust lands to raise money for the construction of public schools, colleges and universities, prisons, and other institutions and to help pay for hospitals, libraries, and other services in several counties.

Goldmark is the state's 13th Commissioner of Public Lands and the first from Eastern Washington.

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