

BRIEFING PAPER 2022-6: HB 98

Forest Land Use Plans; Negotiated Timber Sales; Emergency Firefighters
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

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DIVISION OF FORESTRY

Negotiated Timber Sales

- Alaska timber market's demand for export increases the need for more flexible, long-term negotiated sales.
 - Current law allows large, long-term negotiated sales only if timber is for in-state, local manufacturing.

Action needed: Eliminate local manufacture restriction.

Forest Land Use Plans

- Four steps required before a timber sale; allows public comment and agency review; *appealable:
 - *Area plans & *state forest plans provide the land-use designations allowing harvest
 - Five-Year Schedule of Timber Sales provides overview of future harvests
 - *Best Interest Finding (BIF) documents decision to sell timber; covers all harvest units
 - *Forest Land Use Plans (FLUPs) detail site-specific, on-the-ground implementation of BIF
- BIF: “Should we sell this timber?” FLUPs: “How will the sold timber be harvested?”
 - Public has opportunity for input and comment on BIF and FLUPs on each timber sale
 - BIFs & FLUPs must comply with protections afforded by Forest Resources and Practices Act
- For short-term sales, DOF may prepare BIFs and FLUPs simultaneously.
- For long-term sales, DOF may prepare FLUPs for most accessible units first, then for other units as harvest proceeds, allowing safe, efficient, economical access.
- Both BIFs and FLUPs can now be appealed, opening door to repeated harvest interruptions that deprive purchasers of a stable, predictable timber supply and make Alaskan timber less attractive.

Action needed: Prevent redundant appeals at FLUP stage; refocus appeals at earlier BIF stage

Emergency Firefighters (Amendment, House Resources Committee, HB 98B)

- Current law prevents general funds from being used to pay emergency firefighters (EFF) to perform nonemergency activities, such as constructing hazardous fuel breaks.
- Wildland fire seasons and intensities are increasing while more Alaskans are deciding to live in fire-prone wildland/urban interface areas.
- Creating fuel breaks around communities is a cost-effective and efficient way to fight wildland fire.
- Village fire crew numbers have dwindled because of the lack of stable funding for year-round fire work.
- Few stable, long-term job opportunities exist in rural Alaska.

Action needed: Allow general fund appropriations to be used for nonemergency work by EFFs.

Why is HB 98 important?

HB 98 has a “zero” fiscal note and reduces DOF operational costs, streamlining timber sale process

- Makes forestry planning more efficient
- Retains public & agency participation, including public right to appeal BIF

HB 98 increases timber sale flexibility to meet evolving market demands

- Supports export markets (round-log sales may be negotiated)
- Protects local markets (sales can still be negotiated for local manufacturers)

HB 98 supports the timber industry and provides jobs in forestry and wildland fire

- Provides predictable, consistent, dependable timber supply: no appeal interruptions once BIF is final
- Employs rural Alaskans with stable funding for hazardous fuel work

HB 98 increases Alaskans’ safety from wildland fire

- Builds firefighting capacity by creating year-round employment opportunities for rural fire crews

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