

Date of Hearing: January 12, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

Isaac G. Bryan, Chair

AB 442 (Hadwick) – As Amended April 21, 2025

SUBJECT: Z'berg-Nejedly Forest Practice Act of 1973: working forest management plans: harvest area

SUMMARY: Deletes the requirement that the harvest area of a working forest management plan (WFMP) be contained within a single hydrological area.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Under the Z'berg-Nejedly Forest Practice Act of 1973, the Legislature finds and declares the policy of the state to encourage prudent and responsible forest management of nonindustrial timberlands by approving working forest management plans in advance. (Public Resources Code (PRC) 4511-4630.2)
- 2) Defines “WFMP” as a management plan for working forest timberlands, with objectives of maintaining, restoring, or creating uneven aged managed timber stand conditions, achieving sustained yield, and promoting forestland stewardship that protects watersheds, fisheries and wildlife habitats, and other important values. The harvest area of a WFMA must be contained within a single hydrologic area. (PRC 4597.1 (j))
- 3) Establishes a process for a WFMP prepared by a registered professional forester to be submitted to the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE). PRC 4597.2)

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS:

1) **Author's statement:**

California's forests are one of our most vital natural resources, contributing to the environmental, economic, and cultural health of our state. Poorly managed forests create catastrophic wildfire risk, threatening communities, wildlife, and critical infrastructure. Assembly Bill 442 streamlines WMFPs by removing a requirement that they cannot include more than one watershed. This bill promotes long-term, sustainable forestry practices for non-industrial landowners while protecting California's natural resources.

- 2) **Working Forest Management Plan.** A WFMP is a long-term management plan approved by CAL FIRE for landowners with fewer than 10,000 acres of land and not primarily engaged in the manufacture of forest products. Established by AB 904 (Chesbro), Chapter 648, Statutes of 2013, the objectives of a WFMP include maintaining, restoring, or creating uneven aged managed timber stand conditions, achieving sustained yield, and promoting forestland stewardship that protects watersheds, fisheries, and wildlife habitats.

According to CAL FIRE data, there is only approved one WFMP for one landowner (Region 2), which has been used 14 times for a total acreage of 4,470 (some of which may be overlapping among its uses).

- 3) **California hydrologic areas.** Under the Z'berg-Nejedly Forest Practice Act, the harvest area under a WFMP cannot include more than one watershed (single hydrological area) as defined by State Water Resources Control Board's CalWater 2.2. This bill would delete the requirement that the WFMP be in a single hydrological area.

The California Interagency Watershed Map of 1999 (CalWater 2.2, updated May 2004) is the state's working definition of watershed boundaries. Each hydrologic region is progressively subdivided into six smaller, nested levels: the Hydrologic Unit (major rivers), Hydrologic Area (major tributaries), Hydrologic Sub-Area, Super Planning Watershed, and Planning Watershed. At the Planning Watershed (the most detailed level), where implemented, polygons range in size from approximately 3,000 to 10,000 acres. At all levels, a total of 7,035 polygons represent the state's watersheds.

The State Water Board notes that neither CalWater 2.2.1 nor any of its predecessors is a "pure" watershed map because administrative boundaries such as the state border were used to delineate watershed areas. Some of the boundaries, particularly in developed valley areas, also have legal and administrative purposes other than the representation of actual drainage divides. Further, CalWater is not a legal map document, as it does not represent the Regional Water Quality Control Board jurisdictions.

This restriction poses significant burdens on landowners by forcing them to develop a patchwork of WFPMs, Nonindustrial Timber Management Plans, and Timber Harvest Permits to accommodate watershed boundaries instead of a single WFPM for a harvest area. For example, cutting a tree down pursuant to a WFPM on the top of a ridgeline would violate existing law. The creation of multiple plans instead of a single plan appears to have no environmental benefit. Further, developing multiple plans costs several hundred thousand dollars that could be better be used toward fuels management.

- 4) **This bill.** AB 442 deletes the requirement that the harvest area of a WFMP be contained within a single hydrological area.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

American Council of Engineering Companies of California
California Forestry Association
Humboldt Redwood Company LLC
Pacific Forest Trust

Opposition

None on file

Analysis Prepared by: Paige Brokaw / NAT. RES. /