

Date of Hearing: January 22, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Buffy Wicks, Chair

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

Policy Committee: Natural Resources

Vote: 13 - 0

Urgency: No

State Mandated Local Program: No

Reimbursable: No

**SUMMARY:**

This bill deletes the requirement that the harvest area of a working forest management plan (WFMP) be contained within a single hydrologic area, as specified.

**FISCAL EFFECT:**

Costs to the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) are likely minor and absorbable. CAL FIRE notes that while eliminating the single hydrologic area requirement may potentially increase the department's workload associated with reviewing and approving a greater number of WFMPs, CAL FIRE anticipates this workload to be absorbable, particularly because the department anticipated reviewing a higher volume of WFMPs when the program was first established in statute.

**COMMENTS:**

1) **Purpose.** According to the author:

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) **Background.** Established by AB 904 (Chesbro), Chapter 648, Statutes of 2013, 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. 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 and other important values on non-federal lands in the state. WFMPs are living documents that do not expire; however, the plans undergo multi-agency reviews every five years.

According to the California Forestry Association (Calforests), the sponsor of this bill, WFMPs offer small landowners a more efficient and cost-effective way to manage their

lands for the long-term rather than relying upon a Timber Harvest Plan (THP). CAL FIRE enforces the Forest Practice Rules for timber landowners on non-federal, state, and private lands through a variety of THPs and ministerial notices submitted by registered professional foresters, timberland owners, and licensed timber operators. THPs detail how timber operations are to occur, and THP approval includes an extensive multi-agency and public review process and can take, on average, around 100 days to review and approve.

Under the Z'berg-Nejedly Forest Practice Act, the harvest area under a WFMP may not include more than one watershed (single hydrologic area), as defined in regulations. Calforests contends the reliance on the topographical designation of a hydrological unit has been “a significant hindrance to the WFMP program, as parcel lines and ownership patterns do not follow topographic or watershed boundaries. As such, this provision significantly limits the use of the WFMP program.” According to CAL FIRE data, there is only one approved WFMP for one landowner, which has been used 14 times for a total acreage of 4,470 (some of which may be overlapping among its uses). Calforests argues that by removing the single hydrologic area limitation, “this legislation will allow more small landowners to utilize the WFMP process and contribute more to the collective effort to improve forest health and reduce catastrophic wildfires in the state.”

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