

ASSEMBLY THIRD READING
AB 442 (Hadwick)
As Amended April 21, 2025
Majority vote

SUMMARY

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

Major Provisions

COMMENTS

A WFMP is a long-term management plan approved by the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (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 one approved WFMP.

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 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. This bill would delete the requirement that the WFMP be in a single hydrological area.

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.

Arguments in Support

Pacific Forest Trust writes that as the law is currently drafted, a harvest unit cannot straddle watershed boundaries. This is cumbersome and serves no meaningful environmental protection purpose. Removing this restriction will make this timber harvest planning document – which commits the landowner to sustainable uneven-age management – much more usable.

Arguments in Opposition

None on file

FISCAL COMMENTS

According to the Assembly Appropriations Committee, costs to CAL FIRE are likely minor and absorbable.

VOTES

ASM NATURAL RESOURCES: 13-0-1

YES: Bryan, Alanis, Connolly, Ellis, Garcia, Haney, Hoover, Kalra, Macedo, Muratsuchi, Pellerin, Schultz, Zbur

ABS, ABST OR NV: Wicks

ASM APPROPRIATIONS: 15-0-0

YES: Wicks, Hoover, Stefani, Calderon, Caloza, Dixon, Fong, Mark González, Krell, Bauer-Kahan, Pacheco, Pellerin, Solache, Ta, Tangipa

UPDATED

VERSION: April 21, 2025

CONSULTANT: Paige Brokaw / NAT. RES. /

FN: 0002225