

VIRGINIA ACTS OF ASSEMBLY -- 2000 SESSION

CHAPTER 607

An Act to amend the Code of Virginia by adding in Article 3 of Chapter 3 of Title 58.1 a section numbered 58.1-339.8 and in Article 13 of Chapter 3 of Title 58.1 a section numbered 58.1-439.12, relating to income tax credits.

[H 1306]

Approved April 7, 2000

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That the Code of Virginia is amended by adding in Article 3 of Chapter 3 of Title 58.1 a section numbered 58.1-339.8 and in Article 13 of Chapter 3 of Title 58.1 a section numbered 58.1-439.12 as follows:

§ 58.1-339.8. Riparian forest buffer protection for waterways tax credit.

A. For all taxable years beginning on or after January 1, 2000, any individual who owns land abutting a waterway on which timber is harvested, and who forbears harvesting timber on certain portions of the land near the waterway, shall be allowed a credit against the tax imposed by § 58.1-320 as set forth in this section. For purposes of this section, "waterway" means any perennial or intermittent stream of water depicted on the then most current United States Geological Survey topographical map.

B. The State Forester shall develop guidelines setting forth the general requirements of qualifying for the credit, including the land for which credit is eligible. To qualify for the credit, the individual must comply with an individualized Forest Stewardship Plan to be certified by the State Forester. In no event shall the distance from such waterway to the far end of the timber buffer, on which the tax credit is based, be less than thirty-five feet or more than three hundred feet. The minimum duration for the buffer shall be fifteen years. The State Forester shall check each certified buffer annually to verify its continued compliance with the taxpayer's Forest Stewardship Plan. If the State Forester discovers that the timber in that portion of the land retained as a buffer has been harvested prior to the end of the required term, written notification of such violation shall be delivered to the taxpayer by the State Forester.

C. The tax credit shall be an amount equal to twenty-five percent of the value of timber in that portion of the land retained as a buffer. The amount of such credit shall not exceed \$17,500 or the total amount of the tax imposed by this chapter, whichever is less, in the year that the timber outside the buffer was harvested. If the amount of the credit exceeds the taxpayer's liability for such taxable year, the excess may be carried over for credit against income taxes in the next five taxable years until the total amount of the tax credit has been taken. For purposes of this section, the amount of any credit attributable to qualified buffer protection by a partnership or electing small business corporation (S Corporation) shall be allocated to the individual partners or shareholders in proportion to their ownership or interest in the partnership or S Corporation. The land which is the subject of a tax credit under this section cannot again be the subject of a tax credit under this section for at least fifteen years. The State Forester shall check each certified buffer annually to verify its continued compliance with the taxpayer's Forest Stewardship Plan. If the State Forester discovers that the timber in that portion of the land retained as a buffer has been harvested prior to the end of the required term, written notification of such noncompliance shall be delivered to the taxpayer by the State Forester.

D. To claim the credit authorized under this section, the taxpayer shall apply to the State Forester, who shall determine the amount of credit, using the assessed value of the timber in that portion of land retained as a buffer, and issue a certificate thereof to the taxpayer. The taxpayer shall attach the certificate to the Virginia tax return on which the credit is claimed. In the event the timber in that portion of land retained as a buffer is harvested by the taxpayer or any other person prior to the end of the term originally established in the taxpayer's individualized Forest Stewardship Plan, the taxpayer shall repay the tax credit claimed. Within sixty days after receiving written notification from the State Forester that the taxpayer's plan no longer qualifies for the credit, repayment shall be made to the Department of Taxation. If repayment is not made within the sixty-day period, the State Forester shall notify the locality's Commonwealth Attorney for assistance in collecting the funds from the taxpayer.

§ 58.1-439.12. Riparian forest buffer protection for waterways tax credit.

A. For all taxable years beginning on or after January 1, 2000, any corporation that owns land abutting a waterway on which timber is harvested, and that forbears harvesting timber on certain portions of the land near the waterway, shall be allowed a credit against the tax imposed by § 58.1-400 as set forth in this section. For purposes of this section, "waterway" means any perennial or intermittent stream of water depicted on the then most current United States Geological Survey topographical map.

B. The State Forester shall develop guidelines setting forth the general requirements of qualifying for the credit, including the land for which credit is eligible. To qualify for the credit the corporation must

comply with an individualized Forest Stewardship Plan to be certified by the State Forester. In no event shall the distance from such waterway to the far end of the timber buffer, on which the tax credit is based, be less than thirty-five feet or more than three hundred feet. The minimum duration for the buffer shall be fifteen years. The State Forester shall check each certified buffer annually to verify its continued compliance with the taxpayer's Forest Stewardship Plan. If the State Forester discovers that the timber in that portion of the land retained as a buffer has been harvested prior to the end of the required term, written notification of such noncompliance shall be delivered to the taxpayer by the State Forester.

C. The tax credit shall be an amount equal to twenty-five percent of the value of timber in that portion of land retained as a buffer. The amount of such credit shall not exceed \$17,500 or the total amount of the tax imposed by this chapter, whichever is less, in the year that the timber outside the buffer was harvested. If the amount of the credit exceeds the taxpayer's liability for such taxable year, the excess may be carried over for credit against income taxes in the next five taxable years until the total amount of the tax credit has been taken.

D. To claim the credit authorized under this section, the taxpayer shall apply to the State Forester, who shall determine the amount of credit, using the assessed value of the timber in that portion of land retained as a buffer, and issue a certificate thereof to the taxpayer. The taxpayer shall attach the certificate to the Virginia tax return on which the credit is claimed. In the event the timber in that portion of land retained as a buffer is harvested by the taxpayer or any other person prior to the end of the term originally established in the taxpayer's individualized Forest Stewardship Plan, the taxpayer shall repay the tax credit claimed. Within sixty days after receiving written notification from the State Forester that the taxpayer's plan no longer qualifies for the credit, repayment shall be made to the Department of Taxation. If repayment is not made within the sixty-day period, the State Forester shall notify the locality's Commonwealth Attorney for assistance in collecting the funds from the taxpayer.