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HOUSE BILL NO. 1115

House Amendments in [] - February 1, 2008

A *BILL to amend and reenact § 10.1-1124 of the Code of Virginia, relating to annual payments for forest protection.*

Patron Prior to Engrossment—Delegate Abbitt

Referred to Committee on Agriculture, Chesapeake and Natural Resources

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That § 10.1-1124 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted as follows:

§ 10.1-1124. Counties and certain cities to pay annual sums for forest protection, etc.

A. Upon presentation to its governing body of an itemized statement duly certified by the State Forester, each county in this Commonwealth, or city which enters into a contract with the State Forester under § 10.1-1125 to provide forest fire prevention, shall repay into the state treasury annually any amounts expended in the preceding year by the State Forester in such county or city for forest protection, forest fire detection, forest fire prevention and forest fire suppression, not to exceed in any one year an amount measured by the acreage, computed [, *beginning July 1, 2008,*] upon the basis of ~~five~~ [~~nine~~ *seven*] cents per acre of privately owned forests in the county or city [*and beginning July 1, 2009, nine cents per acre*] , according to the most recent United States Forest Survey. In any additions or deductions of acreage from that given by this survey, any land, other than commercial orchards, sustaining as its principal cover a growth of trees or woody shrubs shall be considered forest land, irrespective of the merchantability of the growth, and cutover land shall be considered as forest land unless it has been cleared or improved for other use. Open land shall be considered as forest land when it bears at least ~~eighty~~ 80 well-distributed seedlings or sprouts of woody species per acre. The amounts so repaid by the counties or cities into the state treasury shall be credited to the Forestry Operations Fund for forest protection, forest fire detection, forest fire prevention and forest fire suppression in the Commonwealth and, with such other funds as may be appropriated by the General Assembly or contributed by the United States or any governmental or private agency for these purposes, shall be used and disbursed by the State Forester for such purposes. In cities this subsection shall be subject to § 10.1-1125.

B. In any case in which the State Forester and the governing body of any county or city cannot agree upon the additions or deductions to privately owned forest acreage in a particular county or city, or to changes in forest acreage from year to year, the question shall be submitted to the judge of the circuit court of the county or city by a summary proceeding, and the decision of the judge certified to the governing body and to the State Forester, respectively, shall be conclusive and final.

ENGROSSED

HB1115E