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HOUSE BILL NO. 1290

Offered January 21, 2016

A *BILL to amend and reenact § 55-332 of the Code of Virginia, relating to timber cutting; determination of damages; attorney fees.*

Patron—Habeeb

Referred to Committee for Courts of Justice

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:**1. That § 55-332 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted as follows:****§ 55-332. Procedure for determination of damage.**

A. The owner of the land on which such trespass was committed shall have the right, within 30 days after the discovery of such trespass and the identity of the trespasser, to notify the trespasser and to appoint an experienced timber estimator to determine the amount of damages. For the purposes of determining damages the value of the timber cut shall be calculated by first determining the value of the timber on the stump. Within 30 days after receiving notice of the alleged trespass and of the appointment of such estimator, the alleged trespasser, if he does not deny the fact of trespass, shall appoint an experienced timber estimator to participate with the one already so appointed in the estimation of damages. If the two estimators cannot agree they shall select a third person, experienced and disinterested, and the decision thereafter made shall be final and conclusive and not subject to appeal. The estimation of damages and the rendition of statement must be effected within 30 days from the receipt of notice of appointment, by the trespasser, of an estimator.

If the alleged trespasser fails to appoint an estimator within the prescribed time, or to notify, within such time, that the allegation of the fact of trespass is disputed, the estimator appointed by the injured party may make an estimate, and collection or recovery may be had accordingly.

B. Any person who (i) severs or removes any timber from the land of another without legal right or permission or (ii) authorizes or directs the severing or removal of timber or trees from the land of another without legal right or permission shall be liable to pay to the rightful owner of the timber three times the value of the timber on the stump and shall pay to the rightful owner of the property the reforestation costs incurred not to exceed \$450 per acre, the costs of ascertaining the value of the timber, ~~and~~ any directly associated legal costs, *and reasonable attorney fees* incurred by the owner of the timber as a result of the trespass.

INTRODUCED

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