

ASSEMBLY BILL

No. 687

Introduced by Assembly Member Patterson

February 14, 2025

An act to add Section 4581.5 to the Public Resources Code, relating to forestry.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 687, as introduced, Patterson. Forestry: timber operations: maintenance of timberlands for fuels reduction.

The Z'berg-Nejedly Forest Practice Act of 1973 prohibits a person from conducting timber operations unless a timber harvesting plan prepared by a registered professional forester has been submitted to, and approved by, the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection. The act provides that any person who willfully violates any provision of the act or rule or regulation of the State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection is guilty of a misdemeanor.

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requires a lead agency, as defined, to prepare, or cause to be prepared, and certify the completion of an environmental impact report on a project that it proposes to carry out or approve that may have a significant effect on the environment or to adopt a negative declaration if it finds that the project will not have that effect. CEQA also requires a lead agency to prepare a mitigated negative declaration for a project that may have a significant effect on the environment if revisions in the project would avoid or mitigate that effect and there is no substantial evidence that the project, as revised, would have a significant effect on the environment.

This bill would authorize projects exclusively for noncommercial wildfire fuels reduction in timberland, paid for in part or in whole with public funds, to prepare a timber harvesting plan as an alternative to complying with CEQA, and would require these projects to be regulated as timber operations, as provided. By expanding the scope of a crime, the bill would create a state-mandated local program.

The California Constitution requires the state to reimburse local agencies and school districts for certain costs mandated by the state. Statutory provisions establish procedures for making that reimbursement.

This bill would provide that no reimbursement is required by this act for a specified reason.

Vote: majority. Appropriation: no. Fiscal committee: yes.

State-mandated local program: yes.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Section 4581.5 is added to the Public Resources
2 Code, to read:

3 4581.5. (a) Projects exclusively for noncommercial wildfire
4 fuels reduction in timberland, paid for in part or in whole with
5 public funds, may prepare a timber harvesting plan pursuant to
6 this article as an alternative to complying with Division 13
7 (commencing with Section 21000).

8 (b) Projects that prepare a timber harvesting plan in lieu of
9 complying with Division 13 (commencing with Section 21000)
10 pursuant to subdivision (a) shall not be considered timber
11 operations, but shall be regulated as timber operations.

12 SEC. 2. No reimbursement is required by this act pursuant to
13 Section 6 of Article XIII B of the California Constitution because
14 the only costs that may be incurred by a local agency or school
15 district will be incurred because this act creates a new crime or
16 infraction, eliminates a crime or infraction, or changes the penalty
17 for a crime or infraction, within the meaning of Section 17556 of
18 the Government Code, or changes the definition of a crime within
19 the meaning of Section 6 of Article XIII B of the California
20 Constitution.