

House File 580 - Introduced

HOUSE FILE 580
BY GEARHART

A BILL FOR

1 An Act relating to selective harvesting of timber on public
2 lands, providing penalties, making appropriations, and
3 including effective date provisions.
4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF IOWA:

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1 Section 1. NEW SECTION. **456A.36A Harvesting public lands.**

2 1. The purpose of this section is to authorize the selective
3 harvesting of mature timber and other trees in public land by
4 private logging companies to generate revenue for the maintenance
5 and improvement of state parks, while ensuring environmental
6 sustainability and public benefit.

7 2. For purposes of this section:

8 a. "Mature timber" means trees that have reached their full
9 growth potential.

10 b. "Private logging company" means a business or entity
11 licensed to perform timber harvesting and logging operations
12 under state law.

13 c. "Public land" means land owned by the state, or a
14 political subdivision of the state, under the jurisdiction of the
15 department and includes state parks.

16 d. "Selective harvesting" means the carefully planned and
17 controlled removal of specific trees, including mature timber, to
18 improve forest health, remove hazardous trees, or manage invasive
19 species, while maintaining the land's ecological integrity.

20 e. "State park" means a public park established pursuant to
21 section 461A.3.

22 3. a. A private logging company may submit a proposal to the
23 department to engage in selective harvesting, which proposal must
24 include all of the following:

25 (1) A detailed assessment of the forest area identifying
26 specific trees, including mature timber, to be harvested.

27 (2) A plan for minimizing environmental impact during and
28 after harvesting.

29 (3) A commitment to reforestation or natural regeneration of
30 the forest.

31 (4) A proposed timeline and compensation structure for the
32 work.

33 b. The department shall decide whether to approve the
34 proposal in a timely manner. When considering whether
35 to approve the proposal, the department shall consider

1 the proposal's adherence to state regulations, environmental
2 protection standards, and park-specific management goals. The
3 department shall not approve a proposal unless the department
4 determines at least one of the following applies to the trees
5 identified in the proposal:

6 (1) Forest health would benefit from the removal of the
7 specific mature trees.

8 (2) The trees pose a risk to public safety, such as dead or
9 dying trees near trails or campsites.

10 (3) Removal of invasive species or nonnative trees is
11 necessary to preserve native ecosystems.

12 c. If the department approves the plan, a permit shall be
13 issued to the private logging company for a reasonable fee based
14 on the amount of selective harvesting permitted and shall include
15 any specific conditions related to the harvest.

16 d. A public comment period of at least thirty days must
17 be held before the department issues a decision pursuant to
18 paragraph "b".

19 4. a. All moneys generated under subsection 3 from
20 harvesting in a state park shall be deposited into the department
21 for deposit in the state park logging account created under
22 section 461.39 and shall be used for purposes of that section.

23 b. All moneys generated under subsection 3 from harvesting on
24 public land other than a state park shall be deposited into the
25 natural resource account created under section 461.32 and shall
26 be used for the purposes of that section.

27 5. a. Harvesting activities shall use best practices to
28 protect soil, water quality, and wildlife habitats.

29 b. For every tree harvested, including mature timber, the
30 department must ensure the natural regeneration of a native tree
31 species or plant new native trees on the public land.

32 c. The department shall implement a long-term sustainable
33 forest management plan to maintain healthy ecosystems and prevent
34 overharvesting.

35 6. a. The department shall submit an annual report to the

1 general assembly by December 31 covering the previous fiscal year
2 and detailing all of the following:

3 (1) The amount and type of timber harvested, including mature
4 timber, at each harvesting site.

5 (2) Moneys generated and how the moneys were allocated and
6 used.

7 (3) Environmental impact assessments and the success of
8 reforestation or regeneration efforts.

9 b. All harvesting plans, financial reports, and environmental
10 assessments shall be publicly available on the department's
11 internet site.

12 7. a. The director may issue any order necessary to secure
13 compliance with or prevent a violation of the provisions of this
14 chapter or any rule adopted or permit or order issued pursuant to
15 this chapter. The person to whom such compliance order is issued
16 may cause to be commenced a contested case within the meaning of
17 chapter 17A by filing within thirty days a notice of appeal to
18 the commission. On appeal, the commission may affirm, modify, or
19 vacate the order of the director.

20 b. Judicial review of any order or other action of the
21 commission or director may be sought in accordance with the
22 terms of chapter 17A. Notwithstanding the terms of chapter 17A,
23 petitions for judicial review may be filed in the district court
24 of the county in which the alleged offense was committed.

25 c. The attorney general, on request of the department, shall
26 institute any legal proceedings necessary to obtain compliance
27 with an order of the commission or the director, including
28 proceedings for a temporary injunction, or prosecuting any person
29 for a violation of an order of the commission or the director,
30 the provisions of this chapter, or any rules adopted or permit or
31 order issued pursuant to this chapter.

32 d. Any person who violates any order issued pursuant to this
33 subsection shall be subject to a civil penalty not to exceed two
34 thousand dollars for each day of such violation.

35 Sec. 2. Section 461.32, subsection 1, Code 2025, is amended

1 to read as follows:

2 1. A natural resources account is created in the trust fund.
3 ~~Twenty-three~~ In addition to any moneys deposited in the account
4 pursuant to section 456.36A, twenty-three percent of the moneys
5 credited to the trust fund shall be allocated to the account.

6 Sec. 3. NEW SECTION. **461.39 State park logging account.**

7 1. A state park logging account is created in the trust
8 fund that shall consist of moneys deposited pursuant to section
9 456A.36A.

10 2. Moneys in the account are appropriated to the department
11 of natural resources in order to carry out all of the following
12 purposes at the specific state park from which the moneys were
13 generated:

14 a. Park maintenance and repairs, including of infrastructure
15 such as trails, campsites, and restroom facilities.

16 b. Educational programs, public outreach, and park
17 improvements.

18 c. Environmental monitoring and long-term forest management
19 plans.

20 Sec. 4. EFFECTIVE DATE. This Act, being deemed of immediate
21 importance, takes effect upon enactment.

22 EXPLANATION

23 The inclusion of this explanation does not constitute agreement with
24 the explanation's substance by the members of the general assembly.

25 This bill relates to selective harvesting of timber on public
26 lands.

27 The stated purpose of the bill is to authorize the selective
28 harvesting of mature timber and other trees in public land by
29 private logging companies to generate revenue for the maintenance
30 and improvement of state parks, while ensuring environmental
31 sustainability and public benefit.

32 The bill allows a private logging company to submit a
33 proposal to the department of natural resources (DNR) to
34 engage in selective harvesting on public lands and provides
35 requirements for the proposal. The bill directs DNR to approve

1 or deny the proposal by considering the proposal's adherence
2 to state regulations, environmental protection standards, and
3 park-specific management goals. The bill prohibits DNR from
4 approving the proposal unless DNR determines the selective
5 harvesting will benefit the forest health from the removal of
6 specific mature trees, will remove risks to public safety, or is
7 necessary to preserve the native ecosystem.

8 If DNR approves the proposal, the bill directs DNR to issue a
9 permit to the private logging company for a reasonable fee based
10 on the amount of selective harvesting permitted. Additionally,
11 the permit must include any specific conditions related to the
12 harvest. Before approval of the proposal, the bill requires a
13 public comment period of at least 30 days.

14 The bill directs any moneys generated from harvesting in
15 a state park to be deposited into the state park logging
16 account created in the bill to be used for enumerated purposes
17 at the specific park from which the moneys were generated.
18 The bill directs all moneys generated under the bill from
19 harvesting on public land other than a state park to be
20 deposited into the natural resources account created under
21 Code section 461.32 and to be used for the purposes of that
22 Code section, which include the establishment, restoration, or
23 enhancement of state parks, state preserves, state forests,
24 wildlife areas, wildlife habitats, native prairies, and wetlands,
25 wildlife diversity, recreational purposes, technical assistance
26 and financial incentives to private landowners to promote the
27 management of forests, fisheries, wetlands, and wildlife, and the
28 improvement of water trails, rivers, and streams.

29 The bill requires harvesting activities to use best practices
30 to protect soil, water quality, and wildlife habitats and directs
31 DNR, for every tree harvested, to ensure the natural regeneration
32 of a native tree species or plant new native trees within the
33 public land.

34 The bill requires DNR to implement a long-term sustainable
35 forest management plan to maintain healthy ecosystems and prevent

1 overharvesting, and to submit an annual report to the general
2 assembly that provides details on harvesting activities, revenue,
3 and environmental impacts resulting from the bill.

4 The bill requires DNR to make all harvesting plans, financial
5 reports, and environmental assessments publicly available on
6 DNR's internet site.

7 The bill provides enforcement mechanisms for any violations of
8 the bill.

9 The bill makes conforming changes to Code section 461.32 to
10 implement revenue allocations in the bill.

11 The bill takes effect upon enactment.

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