



SENATE MAJORITY OFFICE

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Bill sets stage for more Oregon forest jobs, helping rural areas *SB 862 directs Department of Forestry to pursue next steps for expanding biomass*

SALEM – The Oregon Senate approved legislation this morning that will set the stage for job growth and economic development in Oregon’s forests. Senate bill 862 addresses the development of woody biomass opportunities in Oregon by providing direction to the Oregon Department of Forestry and requiring them to conduct an inventory of potential resources across the state.

“Our forests contain a wealth of untapped energy in the form of biomass,” said Senator Joanne Verger (D-District 5), who carried the bill on the floor and is the chief sponsor. “SB 862 aims to harness that energy by allowing the Department of Forestry to conduct an inventory of the potential biomass supply. By getting more projects up and running, we can improve the economic vitality of our rural communities while creating badly-needed jobs in our forests.”

The biomass fuel inventory required by SB 862 will allow investors and other stakeholders to improve planning for future projects by providing comprehensive and detailed information on the locations and amounts of fuel available throughout the state. Currently, such a comprehensive inventory of these resources is lacking. Specifically, there’s a lack of data about fuel available in Northeast Oregon, on private forestlands, in the agricultural sector, and in municipal waste resources.

“Biomass energy is a triple-win –renewable energy, rural jobs, and forest health,” said Senator Chris Edwards (D-Eugene). “It makes sense that the state should take a deliberate approach to assessing biomass opportunities in our state forests.”

Senate Bill 862 allows the State Forestry Department to enter into contracts and leases to allow the sale, exploration, collection, processing, storage, and stockpiling or conversion into energy or biofuel of woody biomass from our state forestlands. The Department would also be required to determine the supply of woody biomass available for use on a sustainable basis. This will ensure that forestlands aren’t overused and that an ongoing inventory of available biomass is available.

Senate Bill 862 passed off the Senate floor with a unanimous vote. The bill now goes to the House.

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