

SENATE BILL NO. 18

INTRODUCED BY P. CONNELL

A BILL FOR AN ACT ENTITLED: "AN ACT ESTABLISHING A GRANT PROGRAM FOR FUEL REDUCTION ON PRIVATE LAND; REQUIRING THAT THE FUND BALANCE IN THE FIRE SUPPRESSION ACCOUNT BE A CERTAIN AMOUNT IN ORDER FOR GRANTS TO BE AWARDED; LIMITING GRANT AWARD AMOUNTS TO A CERTAIN PERCENTAGE OF THE COST OF A PROPOSED PROJECT; REQUIRING GRANT APPLICANTS TO SUBMIT COST ESTIMATES THAT ARE SUBJECT TO REVIEW AND APPROVAL BY THE DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND CONSERVATION FOR PROPOSED PROJECTS; AMENDING SECTION 76-13-150, MCA; AND PROVIDING AN IMMEDIATE EFFECTIVE DATE."

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:

Section 1. Section 76-13-150, MCA, is amended to read:

"76-13-150. Fire suppression account -- fund transfer. (1) There is a fire suppression account in the state special revenue fund to the credit of the department.

(2) The legislature may transfer money from other funds to the account, and the money in the account is subject to legislative fund transfers.

(3) Funds received for restitution by private parties must be deposited in the account.

(4) Money in the account may be used only for the purpose of paying expenses for fire prevention, including fuel reduction and mitigation, grants for fuel reduction and mitigation provided for in subsection (10), forest restoration, grants for the purchase of fire suppression equipment for county cooperatives, and fire suppression costs.

(5) Interest earned on the balance of the account is retained in the account.

(6) Except as provided in subsections (7) and (8), by August 15 following the end of each fiscal year, an amount equal to the balance of unexpended and unencumbered general fund money appropriated in excess of 0.5% of the total general fund money appropriated for that fiscal year must be transferred by the state treasurer from the general fund to the fire suppression account. General fund appropriations that continue from a fiscal year to the next fiscal year and any general fund appropriations made pursuant to 10-3-310 or 10-3-312 are excluded from the calculation.

(7) The provisions of subsection (6) do not apply in a fiscal year in which reductions required by 17-7-140 occur or if a transfer pursuant to subsection (6) would require reductions pursuant to 17-7-140.

(8) The fund balance in the account may not exceed \$100 million.

(9) Up to \$5 million each biennium may be used for the purpose of fuel reduction and mitigation and forest restoration.

(10) (a) If, on July 1 of each year, the fund balance equals or exceeds \$50 million, the department may use up to \$1 million for grants to property owners for the purpose of fuel reduction and mitigation projects on private land.

(b) Grants must be awarded on a matching basis in an amount not to exceed 50% of the approved cost of the fuel reduction and mitigation project.

(c) Applicants for grant funding under this subsection (10) shall submit to the department cost estimates for each proposed project. The cost estimates are subject to review and approval by the department.

~~(10)~~(11) Money in the account is statutorily appropriated, as provided in 17-7-502, to the department for the purposes described in subsection (4)."

NEW SECTION. **Section 2. Effective date.** [This act] is effective on passage and approval.

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