

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

RS24806

The Forest Legacy Program (FLP) is a federal program that supports state efforts to protect environmentally sensitive forests through the use of conservation easements. This bill provides the appropriation to the Department of Lands and the Department of Fish and Game to purchase the Clagstone Meadows conservation easement in Bonner County.

The Clagstone Meadows Forest Legacy project is composed of over 13,000 acres of contiguous private forest land. The landowner, Stimson Lumber Company, wishes to sell the development rights, valued at \$12.6 million, to keep the land in timber production in perpetuity. This transaction will help protect the region's drinking water; protect wetlands; maintain habitat for elk, deer, moose, bear, forest grouse, waterfowl and a variety of native species; retain local timber jobs; and allow for non-motorized public access to private property. The landowner will donate 25% of the value or \$3.125 million, the USDA awarded \$5.5 million through the Idaho Department of Lands, the Trust for Public Lands will raise \$2 million, and the Idaho Department of Fish and Game will contribute \$2 million to complete the transaction. IDFG's portion is from federal Pittman Robertson moneys generated from the sale or exchange of other properties and unobligated moneys.

Legislative Intent is included regarding the purpose of the appropriation, regarding public access, and regarding property tax valuation.

In summary: 1) The landowner commits to a non-development strategy and provides perpetual public access easements to be held by the state of Idaho. 2) The landowner will retain ownership of the property and will continue to manage the timber resources into perpetuity. 3) The landowner will cooperate with the Idaho Department of Fish and Game on management actions and for public access for recreation and hunting. 4) The land owner is free to sell the property, but not to subdivide or construct residences, and the easement will carry forward to subsequent landowners.

FISCAL NOTE

Appropriates \$5 million from the Federal Grant Fund (Land and Water Conservation Fund) to the Department of Lands and \$2 million from the Fish and Game (Federal) Fund (Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration) for a total of \$7 million for FY 2017. The Department of Lands will also use up to \$500,000 of federal fund base appropriation (Land and Water Conservation Fund) for a total fiscal impact of \$7.5 million in federal funds.

Contact:

Ray Houston
Budget and Policy Analysis
(208) 334-4741