

Fire Suppression Bill

EXHIBIT 1
DATE 3/11/09
HB 154

Talking Points for HB 154
Prepared for Representative Bergren
Prepared by Amy Sassano

WHAT DOES HB 154 DO?

- HB 154 removes the sunset date of June 30, 2009 from the Fire Suppression Account.
- The bill expands the uses of the Fire Suppression Account to include fire prevention and fuel mitigation.
- The bill removes the statutory appropriation from the Fire Suppression Account which provides the Legislature with a greater opportunity to review of the status of the fund each session and any available funds will have to be appropriated.
- The automatic statutory transfer from the general fund which would maintain a \$40 million fund balance in the account is removed. Unfortunately, there is not sufficient ongoing general fund revenue available to continue this transfer at this time.
- HB 154 contains a provision which allows funds in the Account to be used to fund remaining fire costs from FY 2008. These funds of \$3 million are currently requested in HB 3.
- The bill also appropriates the remaining account balance of approximately \$30 million for the 2011 biennium.
- If up to \$2 million of the \$30 remain unspent as of May 1, 2010, it can be used to fund fire prevention and fuel mitigation projects.

While the bill does not provide the perfect solution for funding fire suppression costs into the future, it does make an incremental step of providing more up-front money to address these costs. The issue will require continued attention in the sessions to come.

HOW IS HB 154 DIFFERENT FROM HB 165 (REP. VINCENT'S BILL)?

- Both bills remove the sunset on the Fire Suppression Account
- Both bills provide for up to \$2 million of unobligated funding can be used for fuel mitigation. However, HB 165 also allows the \$2 million to be used for grants for the purchase of fire suppression equipment for county cooperatives, and matching grants to counties for rural fire assistance
- HB 165 leaves a statutory appropriation in place for the expenditure of funds from the account.
- HB 165 keeps but reduces the statutory transfer from the general fund into the account to maintain a \$10 million fund balance (rather than a \$40 million balance).
- The bill increases the general fund emergency appropriation from \$16 million to \$21 million per biennium.

Amendment to HB 154, As Introduced
House Appropriations Committee
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1. Page 3, line 9
Strike: "suppression"
Insert: "prevention"