

HOUSE BILL NO. 664
INTRODUCED BY J. KEANE

A BILL FOR AN ACT ENTITLED: "AN ACT ALLOWING THE DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND CONSERVATION TO CONSIDER CONTROLLED BURNING AND LOGGING AS METHODS TO ADDRESS FOREST INSECT PEST INFESTATIONS OR TREE DISEASES; AMENDING SECTION 76-13-304, MCA; AND PROVIDING AN IMMEDIATE EFFECTIVE DATE."

WHEREAS, the mountain pine beetle poses a serious threat to the health of Montana forests and the economic benefits and recreational opportunities that those forests provide; and

WHEREAS, years of fire suppression and drought have made Montana forests especially susceptible to mountain pine beetles;

WHEREAS, in 2006, the mountain pine beetle infected about 881,000 acres in western Montana and northern Idaho, killing more than 2.4 million trees; and

WHEREAS, controlled burning or logging may help control beetle infestations as well as reduce wildfire danger created by large stands of trees killed by beetles; and

WHEREAS, students at Butte High School have studied beetle infestations and concluded that Montana should consider controlled burning or logging to attack mountain pine beetles and preserve the state's forests.

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

Section 1. Section 76-13-304, MCA, is amended to read:

"76-13-304. Suppression and eradication of infestation. (1) The department may enter upon the land within the zone and cause the forest insect pest infestation or forest tree disease to be suppressed, eradicated, and destroyed in the manner approved by it.

(2) In order to accomplish the suppression, eradication, and destruction of the infestation, the department may enter into cooperative agreements with the federal government or other public or private agencies and with forest landowners, using such funds as are made available for those purposes.

(3) The department may consider controlled burning or logging as methods to suppress or eradicate forest insect pest infestation or forest tree disease."

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

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