



VERMONT LEGISLATIVE
Joint Fiscal Office

1 Baldwin Street • Montpelier, VT 05633-5701 • (802) 828-2295 • <https://jfo.vermont.gov>

Fiscal Note

March 20, 2024

Scott Moore, Legislative Finance Manager

H.624 – An act relating to providing financial assistance to the forest economy

As recommended by the House Committee on Agriculture, Food Resiliency, and Forestry, Draft 1.5

Bill Summary

This bill proposes multiple provisions related to the support the forest economy in the State. The Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation (FPR) would, as a pilot, expand the Water Quality Assistance Program. It would also allow the Commissioner of FPR to award grants to provide financial assistance to loggers for the purposes of improving logger safety and professionalism.

Fiscal Impact

This bill would appropriate \$1,045,000 from the General Fund in fiscal year 2025.

Background and Details

The following sections have a fiscal impact.

Section 1

This section would appropriate \$1,000,000 from the General Fund in fiscal year 2025 to FPR to provide financial assistance to logging contractors through the Water Quality Assistance Program. This program would provide assistance for the following:

- implementation of accepted management practices (AMP) on harvest sites to enhance water quality protection and climate adaptation measures;
- purchase of materials that can be used for forest access road construction and sediment control in advance of harvest implementation in order to comply with AMP and other water quality requirements; and
- financial assistance for logging contractors to be Master Logger Certified by third-party entities.

The Program would be a pilot in fiscal year 2025. The Commissioner of FPR would report the results of the program on or before July 15, 2025 to the House Committee on Agriculture, Food Resiliency, and Forestry and the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Energy.

Section 2

The Commissioner of FPR would award grants for the purposes of improving logger safety and professionalism. These grants would be awarded to the Vermont Logger Education to Advance Professionalism program to assist with the costs of logger safety training and continuing education. They

would also be awarded to the Trust to Conserve Northeast Forestlands for the purpose of paying up to 50 percent of the initial certification for up to 30 logging contractors enrolled in the Master Logging Certification Program.

Section 3

This section would appropriate \$45,000 from the General Fund in fiscal year 2025 to FPR to fund grants for logger safety and master logger certifications as outlined in Section 2.