



Legislative Fiscal Bureau

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Joint Committee on Finance

Paper #534

Terrestrial Invasive Species Management (DNR -- Forestry and Parks)

[LFB 2005-07 Budget Summary: Page 367, #8]

CURRENT LAW

Invasive plants are non-indigenous species or strains that become established in natural plant communities and wild areas, replacing native vegetation. Other invasive species, such as the gypsy moth and the emerald Ash borer may create infestation problems and endanger forest health due to the lack of natural pathogens or predators to control or reduce populations.

GOVERNOR

Provide \$441,000 SEG annually from the forestry account for the management of terrestrial invasive species.

DISCUSSION POINTS

1. There are a variety of invasive species creating forest health management difficulties on forestry land statewide. Buckthorn, honeysuckle, and reed canary grass can prevent the regeneration of young trees by out-competing seedlings. Garlic mustard, which has become a significant problem in southern and eastern Wisconsin, crowds out wildflowers, native forest plant species, and tree seedlings. Forest pest species, such as the gypsy moth, can damage or defoliate mature tree stands, and additional invasive pest species (such as the Emerald Ash borer) are anticipated to cause further forest health concerns within the next several years. Instances of invasive species are expected to continue as global trade and international travel increase.
2. Of the amount provided under the bill, \$102,000 SEG would be available annually

for undergrowth control and reforestation efforts, including monitoring, inventory, mapping, and the development of control plans for existing invasive plant infestations in the State Forests. An additional \$339,000 SEG would be provided for the protection, restoration, and reforestation of state owned lands. Forestry reforestation efforts would be coordinated through DNR's nurseries, and would measure overall survival and growth of reforestation plantings throughout the state as well as detect the presence of non-native species (including insects, diseases, and plants) that are interfering with the restoration process. A portion of the funds (\$119,500 SEG annually) would also be used for LTE salaries and supplies to remove invasive species from forested state natural areas, provide additional resources for gypsy moth suppression and management on state owned lands, and to test new invasive species control efforts on Department properties.

3. In calendar year 2004, there were 63 completed timber sales on over 4,400 acres of state forests generating revenues of \$2.6 million. From the perspective that reducing infestations of invasive species will enhance forest health and allow for more productive forestry practices, it may be argued that investing in invasive species control could be expected to generate financial returns to the forestry account, in terms of increased harvests over time due to better overall forest health. Further, controlling or removing invasive species from state forest land is likely to be beneficial to surrounding landowners as well, who may be reluctant to invest time or money in clearing their property if re-infestation from neighboring untreated forest areas is likely. By demonstrating effective invasive species management in state forests, DNR could encourage good forestry management practices among private landowners as well.

4. Given that DNR oversees eight northern state forests and seven southern state forests exceeding 515,000 acres in size, it may be argued that additional resources could increase the speed of the Department's response to this issue. Providing an additional \$119,500 annually for limited-term employee costs could double the number of staff available statewide to remove invasive species infestations from state forest property. To the extent that removing infestations early can significantly reduce dispersal over time, thereby reducing future removal and clean up costs, additional staff resources could potentially create greater benefits in the future.

5. Alternatively, it could be argued that resources for the management of terrestrial invasive species may be utilized most productively over a longer period of time as part of regular ongoing forestry field practices (as opposed to specifically targeted short-term LTE efforts). From this perspective, funding for LTE services could be re-directed for foresters in permanent or four-year project positions to implement a more cohesive long-term management strategy. The amount provided annually for LTE assistance could be used instead to provide three entry-level foresters, providing an ongoing, continuous focus on invasive species issues on State forest property.

6. It should be noted that while funding for this initiative is provided from the forestry account, the Governor indicates in supporting budget documents that services be provided for state-owned forested property (which may include flowages and natural areas that, while forested, have other property designations and potentially different long-term property management goals than state forests). This broader usage of funding provided under the bill is consistent with DNR's budget request. It could be argued that given the limited resources available, funding could be most

effectively utilized by restricting its use for projects to address invasive species only on designated State Forests. However, to the extent that addressing forest health issues (such as invasive species) on state owned land may be seen as a responsibility of the Division of Forestry regardless of the designation of the property being managed, it could be argued that allowing a broader use of forestry account funding for this purpose may be warranted.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Adopt the Governor’s recommendation to provide \$441,000 annually from the forestry account for the management of terrestrial invasive species.

2. Adopt the Governor's recommendation. However, convert funding provided under the bill for limited-term employees to permanent salary and provide 3.0 forester positions to provide a continuous focus on invasive species on state forests lands.

<u>Alternative 2</u>	<u>SEG</u>
2005-07 POSITIONS (Change to Bill)	3.00

3. Provide an additional \$119,500 SEG annually for additional staff to remove invasive species infestations from State Forests. (This Alternative may be selected in addition to Alternatives 1 or 2.) Specify that the funding provided would support:

- (a) 3.0 permanent forester positions;
- (b) 3.0 four-year forester project positions;
- (c) Limited-term employees.

<u>Alternative 3</u>	<u>SEG</u>
2005-07 FUNDING (Change to Bill)	\$239,000

4. Maintain current law.

<u>Alternative 4</u>	<u>SEG</u>
2005-07 FUNDING (Change to Bill)	- \$882,000

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