

## TREE PLANTING PROGRAM

**House Bill 4875**

**Sponsor: Rep. Steve Vear**

**Committee: Agriculture and Resource  
Management**

**Complete to 2-14-00**

### **A SUMMARY OF HOUSE BILL 4875 AS INTRODUCED 9-28-99**

The bill would amend the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act to establish a new program to provide grants to local governments for the purchase of trees to be planted on public lands. The program, to be called the "Michigan Trees for the Twenty-First Century Grant Program" or "MITREES", would be administered by the Michigan State University Forestry Department.

Board. The bill would require the MSU Forestry Department to establish a MITREES board to implement its provisions. The board would have 11 members, appointed by the governor, as follows:

- At least four but no more than six citizens from the private sector, such as community leaders, foresters, people representing statewide tree and urban forester associations, and other interested individuals;
- At least four but no more than six local government officials, such as city planners, urban foresters, and members of city or village councils, township boards, and county boards of commissioners; and
- One or two individuals from state government.

Board members would have to be appointed within 30 days of the effective date of the bill, and would serve staggered two-year terms. Vacancies would be filled in the same manner as original appointments to the board. The governor could remove a board member for incompetency, dereliction of duty, malfeasance, or nonfeasance in office, or for any other good cause.

The governor would call the first meeting of the board, which would elect officers and meet at least quarterly thereafter. A majority of members serving would constitute a quorum for the transaction of business; a majority of the members present and serving would be required for official action of the board. The board would be subject to the Open Meetings Act, and its writings would be subject to the Freedom of Information Act. Board members would serve without compensation, but could be reimbursed for actual and necessary expenses.

Grant program. The board would be required to establish and administer a grant program for the purchase of trees to be planted only on public lands. A grant could not exceed \$30 per tree, adjusted each year for inflation. A selection committee composed of members of the board with

knowledge and expertise in forestry would review grant applications and make recommendations to the board.

Local governments could apply for MITREES grants by submitting an application containing a tree planting plan specifying at a minimum:

- The species of trees proposed to be planted;
- The location where the trees are proposed to be planted;
- The method of planting the trees;
- A description of how the trees will be cared for after planting; and
- A plan for reporting on the viability of the trees during the two-year period after planting.

The board could also require other information on the application, as it determined necessary.

The selection committee would review grant applications at an open meeting, and make recommendations for approving grant applications considering the following:

- The adequacy of the tree planting plan;
- The amount of the grant requested;
- Whether the applicant previously applied for and did not receive a grant;
- The extent to which the issuance of a grant contributes to a proportional distribution of grants throughout the state. The bill specifies that, to the extent that acceptable applications were received, an equal amount of grant money would have to be distributed to each House of Representatives legislative district.
- Other criteria considered necessary by the committee.

The board would review the committee's recommendations and issue grants as it considered appropriate. An applicant who was denied a grant could submit a request for reconsideration.

Grant requirements. The board would have to require, as a condition of granting funds, that a grant recipient: a) plant all trees prior to Memorial Day; b) submit a planting report within 14 days after planting; and c) submit reports describing the number of trees planted and the number surviving as of the following dates:

- 14 days after Memorial Day in the year the trees were planted;
- 14 days after Labor Day in the year the trees were planted;

- 14 days after Memorial Day in the following year; and
- 14 days after Labor Day in the following year.

MITREES fund. The bill would create the MITREES fund in the Department of Treasury. The state treasurer would direct the investment of the fund, which could receive money or assets from any source. Interest and earnings on the fund's investments would be credited to the fund. Money in the fund at the close of a fiscal year would not lapse to the general fund.

Money in the fund could be expended upon appropriation only for making grants as provided in the bill, and three percent of the amount appropriated each year would be spent for the administrative expenses of the board and of the MSU Forestry Department.

Sunset date. The bill would be repealed ten years after it took effect.

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