



LEGISLATIVE BRIEF

HB 79: Hazard Reduction Agreement Small Project Exemption

FORESTRY AND TRUST LANDS DIVISION

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Bill Sponsor: Representative Curtis Cochran

House Bill 79 would clarify and amend definitions in **77-13-401** which would allow Montana's Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) to issue Hazard Reduction Agreements (HRA) Law exemptions to landowners for small-scale commercial harvest projects that would have a minimum slash hazard. This exemption would be utilized primarily by small property owners clearing land for a homesite, reducing wildfire risk by thinning, or cleaning up damage after wind events. From 2013-2020, an annual average of 52 HRAs resulted in less than 5,000 board-feet of material sold to forest product manufacturers.

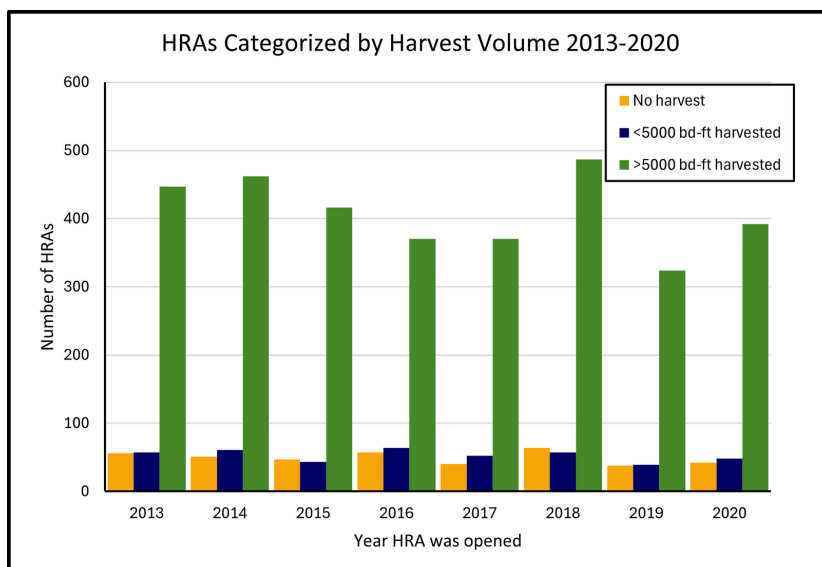
Bill Overview

1. The bill proposal amends the definition of *minimum slash* hazard to include small scale commercial timber harvest. Small scale will be defined as a one-time delivery to a purchaser or 5,000 board-feet (log scale) equivalent, whichever is greater.
2. Landowners would still be required to contact a DNRC Service Forester to receive information on Forestry Best Management practices.
3. Projects would still be required to follow the Streamside Management Zone Law.
4. A written exemption would be issued for projects that meet the criteria as determined by a DNRC Service Forester.

Benefits of HB 79

- Reduce time required to administer HRAs on about 50 projects per year.
- Reduce the burden of paperwork and expense associated with HRA for small projects. This may encourage property owners to sell the wood to forest product manufacturers instead of burning it in slash piles.
- Encourage small forest landowners to actively manage property to reduce wildfire risk.

According to historical data, roughly 50 projects would qualify for this HRA exemption per year.



5,000 board feet = 35 tons =



One truck load of timber
(includes semi with attached pup trailer)