

(A) THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY DECLARES THAT IT IS IN THE GENERAL PUBLIC INTEREST OF THE STATE TO FOSTER AND ENCOURAGE THE DEVELOPMENT, MANAGEMENT, AND PROTECTION OF THE NONINDUSTRIAL PRIVATE WOODLANDS OF THE STATE AS THESE LANDS PROVIDE:

(1) SIGNIFICANT ENVIRONMENTAL, AESTHETIC, AND WILDLIFE BENEFITS; AND

(2) FOR THE PRODUCTION OF TIMBER AND FOREST RESOURCES ESSENTIAL TO COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY IN THE STATE.

(B) THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY FINDS THAT:

(1) THE GROWING DEMANDS ON WOODLANDS AND RELATED LAND RESOURCES CANNOT BE MET BY INTENSIVE MANAGEMENT OF PUBLIC LANDS AND INDUSTRIAL FORESTS ALONE;

(2) NONINDUSTRIAL PRIVATE WOODLANDS OF THE STATE ARE A SIGNIFICANT SOURCE OF THE PRODUCTION OF TIMBER AND OTHER FOREST RESOURCES; AND

(3) UNLESS MEASURES ARE INSTITUTED TO ENCOURAGE LANDOWNERS TO APPLY PRACTICES TO ENSURE THE DEVELOPMENT, MANAGEMENT, AND PROTECTION OF NONINDUSTRIAL PRIVATE WOODLANDS, THIS NATURAL RESOURCE WILL NOT BE SUSTAINED WITH A CONSEQUENT DETRIMENT TO THE CITIZENS OF THE STATE.

(C) IT IS THE INTENTION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY TO PROVIDE INCENTIVES TO ELIGIBLE LANDOWNERS:

(1) TO APPLY PRACTICES THAT PROVIDE FOR:

(I) AFFORESTATION OF SUITABLE OPEN LANDS;

(II) REFORESTATION OF CUTOVER OR OTHER NONSTOCKED OR OVERSTOCKED WOODLANDS;

(III) TIMBER STAND IMPROVEMENT PRACTICES, INCLUDING THINNING, PRESCRIBED BURNING, AND OTHER SILVICULTURAL TREATMENTS; AND

(IV) FOREST RESOURCES MANAGEMENT AND PROTECTION; AND

(2) TO PROVIDE FOR THE NONINDUSTRIAL PRIVATE WOODLAND PRODUCTION OF TIMBER AND OTHER RELATED FOREST RESOURCES.

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(A) THE DEPARTMENT SHALL DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT A WOODLAND INCENTIVES PROGRAM TO ASSIST ELIGIBLE LANDOWNERS IN CONDUCTING A PROGRAM OF WOODLAND MANAGEMENT.

(B) (1) THE SECRETARY SHALL ADOPT REGULATIONS TO CARRY OUT THE PROVISIONS OF THIS SUBTITLE.