

Department of Planning and Budget 2024 Session Fiscal Impact Statement

1. **Bill Number:** HB309

House of Origin Introduced Substitute Engrossed
Second House In Committee Substitute Enrolled

2. **Patron:** Hope

3. **Committee:** Finance and Appropriations

4. **Title:** Department of Forestry; Forest Conservation Plan required.

5. **Summary:** Requires the Department of Forestry (DOF) to convene a technical advisory committee to evaluate current methods of forest canopy and health assessment to identify the most cost-effective means for the Department to perform a forestland and tree canopy assessment study for the Commonwealth. The bill directs the Department to issue a report to the General Assembly on the findings of the committee by November 1, 2024.

6. **Budget Amendment Necessary:** Yes, item 96 of HB30/SB30 as introduced. See Item 8.

7. **Fiscal Impact Estimates:** Preliminary

7a. Expenditure Impact:

<i>Fiscal Year</i>	<i>Dollars</i>	<i>Positions</i>	<i>Fund</i>
2024	-	-	-
2025	\$50,000	0	General

8. **Fiscal Implications:** Based on previous experience and preliminary estimates, DOF estimates that a one-time appropriation of \$50,000 from the general fund will be required to hire a contractor to facilitate the work of the committee, and develop and issue the required report by November 1, 2024.

Budget amendments adopted by the House provide \$630,000 the first year and \$530,000 the second year from the general fund, and one position for the development of a statewide forest conservation plan required by this bill.

9. **Specific Agency or Political Subdivisions Affected:** Department of Forestry

10. **Technical Amendment Necessary:** No

11. **Other Comments:** SB461 requires the department to establish a Forestland and Urban Tree Canopy Conservation Plan to conserve the Commonwealth's forestland and incentivize the

protection of forests and other similar sensitive natural areas as part of state forestry planning and the local comprehensive planning process.