



SB 287 – DODD

Phytophthora Pathogens – Habitat Restoration

Summary

SB 287 would require the Department of Fish and Wildlife to ensure that habitat restoration projects authorized, mandated, or funded by the State use clean nursery stock to minimize the introduction and spread of damaging *Phytophthora* plant pathogens into wildlands.

State agencies promote the use of nursery stock in wildlands through their vegetative cover standards for habitat restoration projects. The best defense against *Phytophthora* pathogens becoming established in wildlands, parks, open space and wetlands is to prevent their inadvertent introduction via infested nursery stock.

Background

Phytophthora (pronounced Fie-TOF-ther-uh; “plant destroyer” in Greek) is a group of microscopic plant pathogens that can damage or kill a wide variety of agricultural, horticultural, and forest plants, including native vegetation. The presence of root-rotting *Phytophthora* species in commercial ornamental plant nurseries has been known for some time. Recently, over 50 *Phytophthora* species, including species detected for the first time in the USA and new hybrid species, have been identified in habitat restoration plantings and native plant nurseries in California.

Many native plants have little or no resistance to these introduced pathogens. These pathogens can persist in the soil and proliferate on the plants they infect, causing irreparable damage to sensitive habitats. *Phytophthora* and other plant pathogens are a concern in restoration activities because the nursery plants are placed into wildland habitat, setting up a direct pathway for pathogen introduction and spread. Once these pathogens are introduced into the wild, they are very difficult, if not impossible, to eradicate.

Existing Law

Existing law does not directly address the use of planting material infected with *Phytophthora* or other pathogens in restoration plantings authorized, mandated, or funded by the State.

This Bill

SB 287 requires the Department of Fish and Wildlife to adopt regulations to minimize the risk of introducing *Phytophthora* pathogens in plant materials used for habitat restoration or enhancement projects.

Support

None on file

Opposition

None on file

Contact

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