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SYNOPSIS:

Under existing law, there is no grant program for the purpose of supporting the logging industry with funding for workforce development, implementing technologies, and constructing rural bridges.

This bill would create the Logging Efficiency Grant Fund and provide for the distribution of funds to the Alabama Forestry Commission to be distributed for the purposes of providing grants for logging workforce development, researching and implementing technologies that promote forest product harvesting and transportation efficiencies, and for counties to maintain and construct public rural bridges.

A BILL
TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT

Relating to the Alabama Forestry Commission; to establish the Rural Logging Efficiency Act of 2023; to create the Logging Efficiency Grant Fund to be administered by the Alabama Forestry Commission; and to provide for the distribution of funding to the Alabama Forestry Commission to



29 support rural economic development.

30 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF ALABAMA:

31 Section 1. (a) This section shall be known and may be
32 cited as the Rural Logging Efficiency Act of 2023.

33 (b) The Legislature finds and declares all of the
34 following:

35 (1) The forest product manufacturing sector is a large
36 contributor to the state's economy.

37 (2) In order to have a successful forest product
38 manufacturing sector, it is imperative that the supply chain
39 for forest raw materials be as competitive and efficient as
40 possible.

41 (3) Logging companies are a vital link of the forest
42 supply chain system and it is critical for the state's economy
43 that these companies have every opportunity to be successful.

44 (4) It is the intent of the Legislature to provide a
45 stable funding source for the following:

46 a. Maintaining, repairing, replacing, and constructing
47 public rural bridges that may not qualify for funding through
48 traditional funding formulas utilized by the state and
49 counties to distribute revenue generated by fuel taxes.

50 b. Researching and implementing technologies that
51 enhance forest product harvesting and transportation
52 efficiencies.

53 c. Providing grants to support logging workforce
54 development.

55 (c) As used in this section, the following words have
56 the following meanings:



57 (1) FOREST PRODUCTS. Any material harvested from a
58 forest or generated by the manufacture of a finished product
59 utilizing materials harvested from a forest, including, but
60 not limited to, logs, pulpwood, chips, poles, veneer, and
61 stumps.

62 (2) RURAL AREA. Any incorporated area within the state
63 with a population of 2,500 inhabitants or fewer according to
64 the most recent federal census or any unincorporated area
65 within the state.

66 (3) RURAL BRIDGE. A load restricted public bridge
67 located in a rural area and posted to limit commercial or
68 school bus traffic.

69 (d) The Alabama Forestry Commission shall do all of the
70 following:

71 (1) Adopt rules to implement and administer this
72 section.

73 (2) Ensure that grants provided for the purposes
74 described in subsection (e) are provided in a manner that does
75 not discriminate based on gender, race, or disability status
76 of the applicant.

77 (3) Ensure that all grant applicants are residents of
78 the State of Alabama.

79 (4) Ensure that all revenues deposited in the Logging
80 Efficiency Grant Fund created under subsection (e) are used as
81 follows:

82 a. Five percent to be retained by the Alabama Forestry
83 Commission for administrative purposes.

84 b. Ten percent to fund grants that support logging



85 workforce development and advance research and implementation
86 of technologies that improve forest product harvesting and
87 transportation efficiencies.

88 c. Eighty-five percent to fund grants to county
89 commissions to maintain, repair, replace, and construct public
90 rural bridges. Grants will be prioritized based on the county
91 commission's application setting forth the amount of matching
92 contributions provided to the project and the rural economic
93 impact of the project, with emphasis placed on forest product
94 production.

95 (5) Create an advisory committee to assist with
96 prioritizing the project grant applications. The advisory
97 committee shall include representatives of county government
98 and the forest products industry.

99 (e) (1) There is created a fund in the State Treasury to
100 be known as the Logging Efficiency Grant Fund. The fund shall
101 consist of all of the following:

102 a. Revenue sources as directed by, and at the
103 discretion of, the Legislature.

104 b. All grants, gifts, bequests, or donations made to
105 the fund from any source whatsoever.

106 c. Appropriations as directed by, and at the discretion
107 of, the Legislature.

108 d. Any other lawful source.

109 (2) Monies in the fund shall be used and expended by
110 the Alabama Forestry Commission in accordance with subsection
111 (d).

112 (3) No monies shall be withdrawn or expended from the



113 fund for any purpose unless the monies have been appropriated
114 by the Legislature and allocated pursuant to this section. Any
115 monies appropriated shall be budgeted and allotted pursuant to
116 the Budget Management Act in accordance with Article 4,
117 commencing with Section 41-4-80 of Chapter 4 of Title 41, Code
118 of Alabama 1975, and only in the amounts provided by the
119 Legislature in the general appropriations act or other
120 appropriations act.

121 Section 2. This act shall become effective on the first
122 day of the third month following its passage and approval by
123 the Governor, or its otherwise becoming law.