

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA  
SESSION 2019

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SENATE BILL DRS45132-ML-80

Short Title: Timber Larceny/Strengthen Laws. (Public)

Sponsors: Senators McInnis, Sawyer, and Burgin (Primary Sponsors).

Referred to:

1 A BILL TO BE ENTITLED  
2 AN ACT TO INCREASE THE PUNISHMENT FOR COMMITTING LARCENY OF  
3 TIMBER.

4 The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

5 SECTION 1. G.S. 14-135 reads as rewritten:

6 "§ 14-135. ~~Cutting, injuring, or removing another's~~Larceny of timber.

7 (a) Offense. – A person commits the offense of larceny of timber if the person does any  
8 of the following:

9 (1) ~~If any person not being the bona fide owner thereof, shall knowingly and~~  
10 ~~willfully cut down, injure or remove any standing, growing or fallen tree or~~  
11 ~~log off the property of another, the person shall be punished the same as in~~  
12 ~~G.S. 14-72.~~Knowingly and willfully cuts down, injures, or removes any  
13 timber owned by another person.

14 (2) Buys timber directly from the owner of the land on which the timber is grown  
15 and fails to make payment in full to the owner by (i) the date specified in the  
16 written timber sales agreement or (ii) if there is no agreement, 60 days from  
17 the date that the buyer removes the timber from the property.

18 (b) Exceptions. – A person is not guilty of an offense under subdivision (2) of subsection  
19 (a) of this section if (i) the person remits payment in full within the time period set in subdivision  
20 (2) of subsection (a) of this section to a person he or she believes in good faith to be the rightful  
21 owner of the timber or (ii) remits payment in full to the owner of the land within the 10-day  
22 period set forth in subsection (c) of this section.

23 (c) Prima Facie Evidence. – An owner of land who does not receive payment in full  
24 within the time period set in subdivision (2) of subsection (a) of this section may notify the timber  
25 buyer in writing of the owner's demand for payment at the timber buyer's last known address by  
26 certified mail or by personal delivery. The timber buyer's failure to make payment in full within  
27 10 days after the mailing or personal delivery authorized under this subsection shall constitute  
28 prima facie evidence of the timber buyer's intent to commit an offense under subdivision (2) of  
29 subsection (a) of this section.

30 (d) Penalty; Restitution. – A person who commits an offense under subsection (a) of this  
31 section is guilty of a Class E felony. Additionally, a defendant convicted of an offense under  
32 subsection (a) of this section shall be ordered to make restitution to the timber owner in an amount  
33 equal to three times the value of the timber (i) cut down, injured, or removed in violation of  
34 subdivision (1) of subsection (a) of this section or (ii) bought but not paid for in violation of  
35 subdivision (2) of subsection (a) of this section.



1 (e) Civil Remedies. – Nothing in this section shall affect any civil remedies available for  
2 a violation of subsection (a) of this section."

3 **SECTION 2.** G.S. 1-539.1 reads as rewritten:

4 "**§ 1-539.1. Damages for unlawful cutting, removal or burning of timber; misrepresentation**  
5 **of property lines.**

6 (a) Any person, firm or corporation not being the bona fide owner thereof or agent of the  
7 owner who shall without the consent and permission of the bona fide owner enter upon the land  
8 of another and injure, cut or remove any valuable wood, timber, shrub or tree therefrom, shall be  
9 liable to the owner of said land for ~~double~~-triple the value of such wood, timber, shrubs or trees  
10 so injured, cut or removed.

11 (b) If any person, firm or corporation shall willfully and intentionally set on fire, or cause  
12 to be set on fire, in any manner whatever, any valuable wood, timber or trees on the lands of  
13 another, such person, firm or corporation shall be liable to the owner of said lands for ~~double~~  
14 triple the value of such wood, timber or trees damaged or destroyed thereby.

15 ...."

16 **SECTION 3.** G.S. 1-539.2B reads as rewritten:

17 "**§ 1-539.2B. ~~Double~~-Triple damages for injury to agricultural commodities or production**  
18 **systems; define value of agricultural commodities grown for educational, testing,**  
19 **or research purposes.**

20 (a) Any person who unlawfully and willfully injures or destroys any other person's  
21 agricultural commodities or production system is liable to the owner for ~~double~~-triple the value  
22 of the commodities or production system injured or destroyed.

23 ...."

24 **SECTION 4.** G.S. 106-897 reads as rewritten:

25 "**§ 106-897. Forest laws defined.**

26 The forest laws consist of:

27 (1) ~~G.S. 14-136~~-G.S. 14-135 to G.S. 14-140;

28 ...."

29 **SECTION 5.** Sections 1 and 4 of this act become effective December 1, 2019, and  
30 apply to offenses committed on or after that date. Sections 2 and 3 of this act become effective  
31 December 1, 2019, and apply to civil actions filed on or after that date. The remainder of this act  
32 becomes effective December 1, 2019.