

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5843

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Natural Resources, Ocean & Recreation, February 19, 2009

Title: An act relating to qualified applicants and procedures within the Washington wildlife and recreation program.

Brief Description: Identifying qualified applicants and procedures within the Washington wildlife and recreation program.

Sponsors: Senators Pridemore and Swecker.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Natural Resources, Ocean & Recreation: 2/16/09, 2/19/09 [DPS, w/oRec].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES, OCEAN & RECREATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5843 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Jacobsen, Chair; Ranker, Vice Chair; Morton, Ranking Minority Member; Fraser, Hargrove and Swecker.

Minority Report: That it be referred without recommendation.

Signed by Senator Stevens.

Staff: Sherry McNamara (786-7402)

Background: The Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program (WWRP) provides funds for the acquisition and development of outdoor recreation and habitat conservation areas.

Counties, cities, ports, park and recreation districts, school districts, state agencies, and tribes are eligible to apply. Grant applications are evaluated annually and the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board (Board) submits a list of prioritized projects to the Governor and the Legislature for approval.

If appropriations for a biennium total \$40 million or less, half of the WWRP funding is distributed to the Habitat Conservation Account and half to the Outdoor Recreation Account.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

If biennial funding is more than \$40 million, a portion of the funding is distributed to the Riparian Protection Account and the Farmlands Preservation Account.

In the Habitat Conservation Account and the Riparian Protection Account, allowable uses of funds include mitigation banking projects. A mitigation bank means a site where habitat is created, restored, enhanced, or preserved to offset authorized project impacts to similar areas.

The state Conservation Commission provides grants and technical assistance to local conservation districts throughout the state.

Nonprofit nature conservancies acquire land and purchase conservation easements to preserve land that is under private ownership.

Summary of Bill (Recommended Substitute): Nonprofit nature conservancy organizations and associations and the state's Conservation Commission are added to the list of eligible recipients for grants from the Riparian Protection Account and the Farmland Preservation Account.

Mitigation banking projects are removed from the list of allowable uses of the Habitat Conservation Account and the Riparian Protection Account.

EFFECT OF CHANGES MADE BY NATURAL RESOURCES, OCEAN & RECREATION COMMITTEE (Recommended Substitute): Requires nonprofit organizations or associations to provide a match in the riparian protection and the farmland preservation accounts.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Original Bill: PRO: This bill will make it possible for landowners to work directly with nonprofit organizations and not through state agencies, which will avoid a lot of red tape in submitting applications for WWRP grant funds. Nonprofit organizations are able to move more quickly and effectively than state agencies in completing the complex grant applications for local landowners. The state Conservation Commission will be able to submit projects from the conservation districts throughout the state and apply directly to the Board for WWRP funds.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Jim Fox, Recreation and Conservation Office; Marcia Fromhold, Washington Wildlife and Recreation Coalition; Len Barson, The Nature Conservancy.