

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 6813

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As of June 1, 2010

**Title:** An act relating to the department of natural resources.

**Brief Description:** Transferring various natural resources management duties to the department of natural resources.

**Sponsors:** Senators Tom, Rockefeller and Shin.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Natural Resources, Ocean & Recreation: 2/17/10.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES, OCEAN & RECREATION

**Staff:** Sherry McNamara (786-7402)

**Background:** The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) manages 5.6 million acres of state-owned land, of which 3 million acres is state trust land that provides revenue to help pay for construction of public schools, universities, and other state institutions, and funds services in many counties. DNR is under the elected Commissioner of Public Lands. The Commissioner chairs the state's Board of Natural Resources, which sets policy for the management of state lands and also the Forest Practices Board, which regulates forest operations.

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) operates as the state's principal agency for species protection and conservation. WDFW is guided by the Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission, which is composed of nine citizen members appointed by the Governor. WDFW operations are lead by a director who is appointed by the Fish and Wildlife Commission.

The Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission operates the state park systems, which includes 120 developed parks, recreation programs, trails, boating safety, and winter recreation. State Parks is governed by a board of seven volunteer citizens appointed by the Governor. The commission appoints the agency director.

**Summary of Bill:** WDFW and the agency known as the State Parks and Recreation Commission are abolished and the powers, duties, and functions are transferred to DNR.

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*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.*

The governor-appointed State Parks and Recreation Commission and the Fish and Wildlife Commission are administratively transferred to DNR.

DNR must be organized to accomplish three objectives:

1. management of state lands and recreation;
2. management of natural resources; and
3. protection of natural resources.

By July 1, 2010, DNR, WDFW, the Fish and Wildlife Commission, and the State Parks and Recreation Commission must complete a plan to implement this merger by September 1, 2010.

By December 1, 2010, DNR must submit to the Legislature any corrective or clarifying legislation necessary to effect the changes in this act.

The Code Reviser is authorized to substitute words designating DNR or the administrator of DNR, as appropriate, to effect the changes in this act or any other act of the 2010 Legislature.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Committee/Commission/Task Force Created:** No.

**Effective Date:** The bill takes effect on September 1, 2010.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:** PRO: In this economic environment we need to reform government, scale down, and have a methodical way of cutting agency budgets. It doesn't make sense to have duplicate state offices in the same area. It is important to look at the way we do state business from the customer's perspective, for instance, why is Mount Si trailhead treated differently than State Parks? It is time to merge operations and create efficiencies.

CON: We oppose the subordination of Fish and Wildlife under the Department of Natural Resources; both missions are equally important. The Governor's Executive Order creates some of these same efficiencies, as in reducing the number of regional offices. The reforming of the environmental agencies should be a deliberative process where the purposes for the change or improvement have been identified. It is counterproductive to just do it for the purpose of cutting budgets.

OTHER: The bill is merging administrations at the expense of programs and needs a thorough cost analysis. Alternate language is needed in Section 4 for classified staff.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Senator Tom, prime sponsor; Lenny Young, DNR.

CON: Miranda Wecker, Fish and Wildlife Commission; Mark Quinn, Washington Wildlife Federation; Howard Briggs, Washington State Snowmobile Association; Bill Robinson, The Nature Conservancy; Doug Levy, Washington Recreation and Park Association; Toe Taller,

Rex Derr, Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission; Jonathan Guzzo, Washington Trails Association; Phil Rigdon, Yakama Nation.

OTHER: Tim Young, Alia Griffins, Washington Federation of State Employees.