

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2002

As Reported by House Committee On: Appropriations

Title: An act relating to snowmobile license fees.

Brief Description: Modifying snowmobile license fees.

Sponsors: Representatives Condotta and Reykdal.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Appropriations: 3/25/13, 3/28/13 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Raises the snowmobile annual registration and renewal fee to \$40 for registrations due on October 1, 2013, until October 1, 2014.
- Raises the snowmobile annual registration and renewal fee to \$50 for registrations due on or after October 1, 2014.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 29 members: Representatives Hunter, Chair; Ormsby, Vice Chair; Alexander, Ranking Minority Member; Chandler, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Wilcox, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Buys, Carlyle, Cody, Dahlquist, Dunshee, Fagan, Green, Haigh, Haler, Harris, Hudgins, Hunt, Jinkins, Kagi, Maxwell, Morrell, Pedersen, Pettigrew, Pike, Ross, Schmick, Seaquist, Springer and Sullivan.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 1 member: Representative Taylor.

Staff: Michael Bennion (786-7118).

Background:

In 1971 the State Parks and Recreation Commission (Commission) implemented the Snowmobile Act by entering into agreements with other agencies, organizations, and

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individuals to: (1) remove snow from parking areas; (2) groom trails; (3) provide sanitation, education and enforcement, equipment, and administration; and (4) certify volunteer instructors to provide safety training classes.

The Commission administers the Snowmobile Program with funds appropriated from the Snowmobile Account. The Snowmobile Account is funded from two primary sources: (1) a snowmobile annual registration fee; and (2) 23 cents per gallon of fuel, based on 135 gallons of fuel usage per year per registered snowmobile distributed as a gas tax refund. The Snowmobile Advisory Committee (SAC) advises the Commission on the use of funds and on the planned development of snowmobile facilities and programs. The SAC is made up of snowmobilers, cross-country skiers, and representatives from the Washington State Association of Counties and state agencies.

All snowmobiles in the state must be registered annually by the Department of Licensing or a licensing agent. Snowmobile registrations are valid October 1 through September 30 of the following year. The fee currently is set at \$30, the maximum amount statute allows. However, for vintage snowmobiles, defined as being manufactured at least 30 years ago, the fee is \$12 annually. There were 28,674 snowmobiles registered in the state in 2012, of which 248 were identified as vintage.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

The snowmobile registration fee is increased from \$30 to \$40 until October 1, 2014, for registrations due on October 1, 2013. The snowmobile registration fee is increased another \$10 to a total of \$50, effective for registrations due on or after October 1, 2014. The vintage snowmobile registration fee is unchanged.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The substitute bill clarifies that the fee increases apply to and align with the snowmobile registration period.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) The budget for the Snowmobile Program is \$2.1 million right now and to maintain the current level of service requires about \$2.6 million, which does not provide much for equipment replacement, trail expansion, or service level increases. In recent years,

the downturn in the economy has led to less funds available for the program and the cost of grooming has increased because of fuel costs. It is very important for there to be adequate grooming, especially for those first learning to ride a snowmobile. Without additional funds the trails will be rougher and less desirable to ride on. Fewer people enjoying the trails and snowmobiling has an impact on the surrounding local businesses and economies. The fee has not been increased in some time. Grooming operators are working under a 28 percent reduction in hours. The state's children and grandchildren should be able to continue experiencing the snowmobiling opportunities in the state. The Snowmobile Program runs for 16 weeks in the winter. For a family to go out and enjoy two days on the snow could cost \$350 in fuel alone to ride snowmobiles and play. Asking for the fee increases is a drop in the bucket and only halfway towards reaching sustainability. The program also supports nonmotorized recreation because there is joint use of parking lots and trails with cross-country skiers and dog mushers. The Washington State Snowmobile Association recommends tying the effective dates to the bill's registration period.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Condotta, prime sponsor; Pamela McConkey and Wayne McLaughlin, Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission; Jim Hedblom; Mike Couch; Carl Corn, Cascade Drift Skippers Snowmobile Club; and Sandy Sternod and Terry Kohl, Washington State Snowmobile Association.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.