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**HOUSE BILL 2553**

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**State of Washington 66th Legislature 2020 Regular Session**

**By** Representatives Lekanoff, DeBolt, Shewmake, Peterson, Blake, Fitzgibbon, Senn, Rude, Doglio, Kloba, Pollet, and Santos

AN ACT Relating to creating a joint executive, legislative, and interagency work group on water resource policy for the purpose of developing a statewide water action plan; adding a new section to chapter 90.03 RCW; and creating a new section.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1) The legislature finds that management of water resources throughout the state would be improved by aligning the state's laws, policies, and resources with current and forecast needs. Decades of statutory changes that respond to specific water resource issues and court decisions have resulted in a complex and confusing legal environment for water users and for water managers in the department of ecology. A lack of clarity in the state's water policy contributes to reduced certainty and efficiency in the use of public and private resources in water rights administration.

(2) The legislature intends to address this situation by creating a work group to develop a statewide water action plan. It is the intent of the legislature to provide state agencies and water users with a cohesive strategy to ensure that the state's water policies provide a clear and effective foundation on which to make sound decisions about allocations of water resources.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 90.03 RCW to read as follows:

(1) A joint executive, legislative, and interagency work group on water resource policy is established for the purpose of developing a statewide water action plan that identifies areas of statute, administrative rule, policy, and practice that should be updated, and makes appropriate corresponding strategic policy recommendations, in order to ensure that water resources are appropriately allocated to address current and future statewide needs.

(2) The work group consists of the following members:

(a) Two members from each of the two largest caucuses of the senate, appointed by the president of the senate;

(b) Two members from each of the two largest caucuses of the house of representatives, appointed by the speaker of the house of representatives;

(c) A representative from the office of the governor, appointed by the governor;

(d) A representative from the department, appointed by the director of the department;

(e) A representative from the department of agriculture, appointed by the director of the department of agriculture;

(f) A representative from the department of health, appointed by the secretary of the department of health; and

(g) A representative from the department of fish and wildlife, appointed by the director of the department of fish and wildlife.

(3) There are two cochairs of the work group. One cochair of the work group must be a member of the majority caucus of one chamber of the legislature and one cochair must be a member of the minority caucus of the other chamber of the legislature, as those caucuses existed as of January 13, 2020.

(4) The work group shall, by a majority of the members, adopt rules to govern its conduct as may be necessary or appropriate, including reasonable procedures for calling and conducting meetings of the work group, ensuring reasonable advance notice of each meeting, and providing for the right of the public to attend each meeting.

(5) The work group shall convene from time to time at the call of one or both of the cochairs or upon the request of three or more members of the work group. The work group must meet at least three times each calendar year and the work group is encouraged to hold at least one of its meetings each year at a location outside of Olympia. In even-numbered years, at least one meeting, which must take place no later than September 30th, must include a review of recent progress in the area of water policy and a consideration of water-related policy or budgetary matters to come before the legislature during the upcoming legislative session. Any meeting of the work group must include an opportunity for public comment.

(6) The work group has the following responsibilities:

(a) To conduct a comprehensive review of water policy, including statutes, case law, administrative rules, policies, and the laws and policies of other states, where appropriate;

(b) To engage stakeholders in the work group's deliberations through outreach conducted by the department and reports from the department to the work group;

(c) To produce and periodically update a statewide water action plan that identifies areas of statute, administrative rule, policy, and practice that should be updated in order to ensure that water resources are appropriately allocated to meet current and future statewide needs; and

(d) As part of the statewide water action plan, to make recommendations to the legislature on budgetary and policy actions related to water resource policy.

(7) Policy and budgetary recommendations of the work group must be made by a sixty percent majority of the appointed members of the work group. Minority recommendations that achieve the support of at least three of the appointed members of the work group may also be submitted to the legislature. The representatives of the office of the governor, and of the departments of ecology, agriculture, health, and fish and wildlife are not eligible to vote on the policy or budgetary recommendations. If a member has not been designated for a position set forth in subsection (2) of this section, that position may not be counted for purposes of determining a quorum.

(8) The expenses of the operations of the work group, including the expenses associated with the work group's meetings, must be paid by the department, except that the costs of attendance at work group meetings incurred by work group members, including representatives of other departments, of the house of representatives, and of the senate, must be borne by the individual department, the house of representatives, and the senate, respectively. Legislative members of the task force are reimbursed for travel expenses in accordance with RCW 44.04.120.

(9) Staff support for the work group must be provided by the respective departments whose representatives serve on the work group, except that staff support for legislative members of the work group must be provided by the office of program research, for members of the house of representatives, and by senate committee services, for members of the senate.

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