

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5608

As of January 12, 2022

Title: An act relating to free public access to state parks and lands.

Brief Description: Concerning free public access to state parks and lands.

Sponsors: Senators Wilson, L., Braun, Brown, Dozier, Fortunato, Hasegawa, Keiser, Rivers, Short, Wagoner and Wilson, J..

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Agriculture, Water, Natural Resources & Parks: 1/13/22.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Repeals the Discover Pass Program.
- Provides that the State Parks and Recreation Commission may not charge a fee for general park access or parking.
- Requires the State Treasurer to transfer \$30,553,000 from the general fund into the recreation access account beginning in fiscal year 2023.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, WATER, NATURAL RESOURCES & PARKS

Staff: Karen Epps (786-7424)

Background: Public Lands. The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW), the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), and the State Parks and Recreation Commission (SPRC) are charged with managing the public lands of the state. DFW owns or manages nearly 1 million acres of public land and 500 water access areas for fish and wildlife, habitat conservation, and wildlife-related recreation. DNR protects and manages 5.6 million acres of state-owned land. The state parks system includes 124 developed parks covering approximately 138,000 acres.

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

Discover Pass Program. In 2011, the Legislature established the Discover Pass Program. The Discover Pass establishes a user fee for motor vehicle access to recreational areas managed by SPRC, DNR, and DFW. A Discover Pass costs \$35 per year, while a day-use permit costs \$11.50 per day. The annual Discover Pass is transferrable between two vehicles. The penalty for failure to display the required recreation access pass or permit is \$99. The penalty is reduced to \$59 if an individual provides proof of a Discover Pass purchase to the court within 15 days of being notified of a violation.

Summary of Bill: The Discover Pass Program is repealed. SPRC may not charge a fee for general park access or parking. A pass or permit issued by DFW is required to park a motor vehicle upon improved DFW access facilities. Beginning in fiscal year 2023, the State Treasurer must transfer \$30,553,000 from the general fund into the recreation access account on July 1, 2022. For each fiscal year thereafter, the State Treasurer must increase the total transfer by the fiscal growth factor for that fiscal year.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 8, 2022.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect on July 1, 2022.