

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1342

As Reported By House Committee On:

Natural Resources

Title: An act relating to the parks and recreation commission.

Brief Description: Creating the parks renewal and stewardship account.

Sponsors: Representatives Fuhrman, Buck, Sehlin, Romero, Ogden, Regala, Jacobsen and Basich; by request of Parks and Recreation Commission.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Natural Resources: 2/3/95, 2/14/95 [DP].

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 15 members: Representatives Fuhrman, Chairman; Buck, Vice Chairman; Pennington, Vice Chairman; Basich, Ranking Minority Member; Regala, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Beeksma; Cairnes; Elliot; G. Fisher; Jacobsen; Romero; Sheldon; Stevens; B. Thomas and Thompson.

Staff: Rick Anderson (786-7114).

Background: In 1971 the Legislature created the Trust Land Acquisition Program. This program authorized the State Parks and Recreation Commission to purchase trust lands which are suitable for park purposes from the Department of Natural Resources. There are 50 trust land parcels identified in statute as suitable for these purchases. All but one of the parcels identified in statute have been purchased by the State Parks and Recreation Commission for inclusion in the parks system. Currently, the Board of Natural Resources negotiates the terms of the sale with the Parks Commission.

The 1971 legislation also established the trust land purchase account. Originally, all monies from park concessions and user fees were deposited into this account and used to assist the Parks Commission in purchasing trust lands identified for addition to the parks system. In recent years, this account has been increasingly used to fund park operations.

The 1994 supplemental operating budget directed the Parks Commission to study options for increasing the involvement of non-governmental organizations in the

acquisition, development, and operation of the state parks system. The Office of Financial Management also directed the Parks Commission to review the way its programs are funded and to recommend appropriate alternatives. The commission's study made a number of recommendations, including establishing a dedicated, non-appropriated account into which park user fees would be deposited for park operations and maintenance. This recommendation has been introduced to the Legislature as HB 1342.

The park land trust revolving fund is a non-appropriated fund used by the Department of Natural Resources to purchase property to replace trust lands sold to the State Parks and Recreation Commission. Expenditures from the fund are authorized by the Board of Natural Resources.

The Parks Commission is authorized to sell timber from State Parks if the timber is surplus to the needs of the park. State law defines the manner by which trees on park lands are managed and removed.

Summary of Bill: The trust land purchase account is eliminated and the parks renewal and stewardship account is created. All State Park revenue, including user fees, leases, and concessions are deposited into the renewal and stewardship account. During the 1995-97 biennium, and thereafter, \$18 million must be expended from the account for operation of state parks. Any revenues over \$18 million may be used for capital improvements, stewardship activities, or for other activities as determined by the Parks Commission. The account is subject to allotment procedures but is not subject to legislative appropriation.

Revenue from surplus timber sales on state park land is to be deposited into the renewal and stewardship account.

The Department of Natural Resources and State Parks are granted general authority to negotiate the sale of trust lands to the Parks Commission at fair market value.

The names and descriptions of previously purchased trust land parcels are removed from the statute. Technical changes are made in provisions dealing with administration of the park land trust revolving fund. Disbursements from the fund may be made by authorization of the Department of Natural Resources, rather than the Board of Natural Resources.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect on July 1, 1995.

Testimony For: Visits to state parks have increased greatly over the past 10 years. At the same time, funding and staff to operate the state parks has decreased. The state park system has \$40 million dollars in deferred maintenance. This bill is necessary to allow the commission implement its plan to run the state park system more like a business.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Russ Cahill, Washington Parks and Recreation Commission; Bob Petersen, Washington Parks and Recreation Commission; Mary Beth Hill, Washington Parks and Recreation Commission; Bill Overby, Washington Parks and Recreation Commission; and Scott Taylor, Washington Public Ports Association (all in favor).