

HOUSE BILL REPORT

ESB 6566

As Reported By House Committee On:

Natural Resources
Appropriations

Title: An act relating to snowmobile registration fees.

Brief Description: Increasing the annual snowmobile registration fee.

Sponsors: Senators Fraser, Loveland, Hochstatter and Newhouse.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Natural Resources: 2/21/96 [DPA];

Appropriations: 2/22/96, 2/24/96 [DPA(NR)].

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 10 members: Representatives Fuhrman, Chairman; Buck, Vice Chairman; Basich, Ranking Minority Member; Regala, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Beeksma; Elliot; Hatfield; Jacobsen; B. Thomas and Thompson.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 3 members: Representatives Pennington, Vice Chairman; Sheldon and L. Thomas.

Staff: Linda Byers (786-7129).

Background: All snowmobiles in the state must be registered annually by the Department of Licensing. The annual registration fee is established by the State Parks and Recreation Commission, in consultation with the Snowmobile Advisory Committee. The Snowmobile Advisory Committee advises the commission on the planned development of snowmobile facilities and programs and is made up of snowmobilers, cross-country skiers, and representatives from the Washington State Association of Counties and state agencies.

The snowmobile registration fee currently is set at \$15, the maximum amount statute allows. Registration fees are deposited in the Snowmobile Account. The Legislature appropriates funds in this account to the commission for snowmobile-related programs and activities such as trail grooming.

As of December 31, 1995, more than 24,500 snowmobiles were registered in the state.

Summary of Amended Bill: When establishing the annual snowmobile registration fee, the State Parks and Recreation Commission must also consult with any statewide snowmobile user groups, in addition to consulting with the Snowmobile Advisory Committee.

The \$15 statutory cap on annual registration fees is eliminated. The commission shall increase the fee from \$15 to \$17.50, effective September 30, 1996, and from \$17.50 to \$20, effective September 30, 1997. After the 1997 fee increase, the commission may not increase the fee more often than every two years, and then only after consultation with the Snowmobile Advisory Committee and any statewide snowmobile user groups.

Amended Bill Compared to Engrossed Bill: The amended bill removes a provision in current law regarding annual fee increases and adjusts the sentence structure of the engrossed bill regarding the 1996 and 1997 fee increases.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Amended Bill: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: This bill requests a fee increase to improve the trail grooming program. Of 26,514 surveys mailed to snowmobile owners, about 8,000 owners responded to the survey, and, of these, 67 percent supported the \$5 fee increase. The current income for the snowmobile program does not meet all the needs. This is strictly a user-pay program; all the money in the program comes from users. Future fee increases will be limited by Initiative 601.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Alan Matson and Mike Ryherd, Washington Snowmobile Association (both in favor).

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Majority Report: Do pass as amended by Committee on Natural Resources. Signed by 26 members: Representatives Huff, Chairman; Clements, Vice Chairman; Pelesky, Vice Chairman; H. Sommers, Ranking Minority Member; Valle, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Brumsickle; Carlson; Cooke; Crouse; Dyer; Foreman; Grant; Hickel; Kessler; Lambert; Linville; McMorris; Poulsen; Reams; Rust; Sehlin; Sheahan; Silver; Smith; Talcott and Wolfe.

Staff: Nancy Stevenson (786-7137).

Summary of Recommendation of Committee on Appropriations Compared to Recommendation of Committee on Natural Resources: No new changes were recommended.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Amended Bill: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: The request for services is higher than the dollars available. The registered owners have been surveyed. The owners support the service increase and are willing to pay for it.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Mike Ryherd, Washington Snowmobile Association; and James Horen, Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission.