

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1243

As Reported By House Committee On:

Natural Resources

Title: An act relating to the Washington state horse park.

Brief Description: Establishing the Washington state horse park.

Sponsors: Representatives Brumsickle, Morris, Pennington, Chappell, Fuhrman, Foreman, Carlson, Sheldon, Poulsen, Kremen and Basich.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Natural Resources: 2/7/95, 2/21/95 [DPS].

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill 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: Linda Byers (786-7129).

Background: The state has expressed interest in the concept of a state horse park since the mid-1980s, when a Department of Agriculture study requested by the Legislature recommended creation of a state-owned and operated equestrian center. The Washington State Horse Council began pursuing development of the concept with the State Parks and Recreation Commission in the late 1980s. In 1990, the commission completed a feasibility study of creating a publicly-owned, year-round equestrian facility. The initial site identified for development was property adjacent to Lewis and Clark State Park in Lewis County.

In 1991, the Legislature appropriated \$200,000 to the commission for planning an equestrian center at Lewis and Clark State Park, and also provided funding to the commission through the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program to begin acquiring parcels adjacent to the park. In 1992, the original site was found to be unsuitable. The site currently under consideration is a few miles from the original site. Part of the area is in private ownership, and part of the proposed site is

Department of Natural Resources (DNR)-managed state trust lands. Site acquisition would involve transferring a parcel from DNR management to the State Parks and Recreation Commission's management through the state's trust land transfer program, and reconveyance of forest board transfer lands back to Lewis County for public park purposes.

Summary of Substitute Bill: The Washington State Horse Park is established, to be located at a site approved by the State Parks and Recreation Commission. The park is to be developed in stages, based on factors such as donations from private sources, the availability of volunteers to work on park development, and revenues generated by the facility itself as it is developed. The state and the county are encouraged to provide a long-term lease of horse park property in their respective ownerships at a minimal charge.

The Governor is directed to form a public nonprofit corporation called the Washington State Horse Park Authority. The authority is responsible for development, promotion, operation, management, and maintenance of the state horse park. The Governor is to appoint a seven-member board of directors for the authority. One board member is to represent the interests of the State Parks and Recreation Commission; one board member is to represent the interests of the county in which the park is located; and five board members are to represent the diversity of equestrian interests in the state. Authority board members serve without compensation but may be reimbursed by the authority for travel expenses.

The authority is authorized to exercise most of the general powers of any nonprofit corporation. The authority is specifically authorized to hire and fire employees, accept gifts and grants, establish and collect fees, enter into cooperative agreements, grant concessions and leases at the state horse park, and undertake other acts necessary to carry out the purposes of the authority and the horse park. Employees of the authority are exempt from civil service and related provisions of law available to other state employees.

The authority may insure its obligations and potential liability either through the Department of General Administration's risk management program or through the private sector. Obligations incurred by the authority and any other liabilities or claims against the authority are to be enforced only against the assets of the authority and not against the state or county. The authority may not incur any indebtedness for a term of longer than 18 months, and the authority may not issue bonds.

The Washington State Horse Park Authority Account is created in the custody of the state treasurer. Fees and charges assessed by the authority and any monetary gifts accepted by the authority are to be deposited in this account. Only the authority is authorized to make expenditures from the account, and expenditures may be used for

development, promotion, operation, management, and maintenance of the horse park. The account is not subject to appropriation.

The authority is to provide preferential use of horse park facilities for youth and the disabled at nominal cost. If they find it to be of mutual interest, the authority and other state agencies are authorized to collaborate and cooperate on projects of shared interest.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The substitute bill directs the Washington State Horse Park Authority to provide preferential use of horse park facilities for youth and the disabled at nominal cost.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: This idea originated with a former director of State Parks looking for ways to create activities to bring more people into state parks. This would create a great public/private partnership. These various parties are working together to block up land for the site. It would then be leased to private enterprise to run the park. There are a lot of horse owners in the Northwest. This will have a great financial impact in an area that really needs it. It will attract thousands of visitors, many from out of state. The bill has the support of many horse groups. It will provide a place for people to showcase their horses for years to come. Horse parks in other states have been successful. Many kids who like horses are handicapped by the costs of keeping and showing them. Horses are a good alternative for kids instead of drugs and alcohol.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Representative Bill Brumsickle, prime sponsor; Karen Munro, Kay Sabich and Amy Roden, Washington State Horse Park Foundation; and Russ Cahill, Washington State Parks (all in favor).