

HOUSE BILL REPORT

2SSB 5216

As Reported By House Committee On:
Natural Resources

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

Brief Description: Creating the state parks renewal and stewardship account.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Fraser, Swecker, C. Anderson, Spanel, McAuliffe, Oke, Drew, Owen, Winsley, Haugen and Kohl; by request of Parks and Recreation Commission).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Natural Resources: 3/29/95, 3/31/95 [DPA].

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 13 members: Representatives Buck, Vice Chairman; Pennington, Vice Chairman; Basich, Ranking Minority Member; Regala, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; 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 State Parks and Recreation 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 State Parks and Recreation 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 State Parks and Recreation 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 State Parks and Recreation 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 State Parks and Recreation 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 Amended Bill: Legislative findings are made that funding for state parks has declined over the past 14 years and that the Legislature intends to reverse that decline by dedicating park revenues to park operations and other activities.

The parks renewal and stewardship account is created. All State Parks and Recreation Commission 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 State Parks and Recreation Commission. The account is 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 is 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. The trustland purchase account is eliminated.

Amended Bill Compared to Second Substitute Bill: The amended bill requires the first \$18 million of park revenue deposited into the account to be spent on park operations. Any revenues beyond \$18 million are to be spent on renewal and stewardship projects. The amended bill adds legislative intent language.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date of Amended Bill: The bill takes effect on July 1, 1995.

Testimony For: The bill will help the agency to become more entrepreneurial and to reverse the decline in deferred maintenance.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Russ Cahill, Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission (in favor).