

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 1634

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Ecology & Parks, February 23, 1996

Title: An act relating to metal detectors in state parks.

Brief Description: Restricting the state parks and recreation commission authority to regulate metal detectors.

Sponsors: House Committee on Natural Resources (originally sponsored by Representatives Sheldon, Cairnes, Elliot, Fuhrman and Stevens).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Ecology & Parks: 2/23/96 [DPA].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON ECOLOGY & PARKS

Majority Report: Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators Fraser, Chair; Fairley, Vice Chair; Hochstatter, McAuliffe, Spanel and Swecker.

Staff: Kari Guy (786-7437)

Background: The State Parks and Recreation Commission manages 124 parks encompassing approximately 240,000 acres of land. Under the state law dealing with archaeological sites and resources, "historic archaeological resources" are defined as those properties which are listed in or eligible for listing in the Washington State Register of Historic Places or the National Register of Historic Places. The State Parks have 18 parks listed or eligible for listing on the federal and state historic registers. An additional 18 parks are not on registers but are classified as State Park Heritage Sites. Approximately 20 percent of state park lands have been surveyed to determine the importance of historic or archaeological resources.

The use of metal detectors in state parks is governed by rules adopted by the State Parks and Recreation Commission. The rules restrict the use of metal detectors to specified portions of selected state parks during daylight hours. The rules include registration requirements, and provide that exceptional uses of metal detectors may be allowed through the issuance of a special recreation event application. Persons operating metal detectors must never disturb or destroy park facilities, natural features, or historical or archaeological resources. Any item found which appears to have historic significance must be immediately reported to park personnel. There are currently 66 state parks that have areas open for use of metal detectors.

Summary of Amended Bill: Legislative intent is stated to develop an innovative method to identify historic archaeological resources, and to allow recreational use of metal detectors in appropriate areas of state parks.

The Parks and Recreation Commission is to complete a study of one state park by September 1, 1996, to identify historic resources. To the extent possible, the study shall be designed and implemented using volunteers.

Striking Amendment Compared to Original Bill: Language prohibiting the State Parks Commission from limiting access to state parks for metal detectors is eliminated. The provision to study one state park using volunteers is added.

Appropriation: \$18,000.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: The proposed amendment was suggested by State Parks staff. People who use metal detectors support this amendment as a way to begin opening state parks to metal detector use.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Terry Wright, Hood Canal D.; Russ Cahill, State Parks (pro).