

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5898

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As Passed Senate, March 9, 1995

**Title:** An act relating to open burning of grasses grown for seed.

**Brief Description:** Providing that research studies for alternatives to grass burning be conducted by Washington State University.

**Sponsors:** Senators Rasmussen, West, Loveland, Newhouse, Bauer and Morton.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Ecology & Parks: 2/22/95, 2/28/95 [DP-WM].  
Passed Senate, 3/9/95, 47-0.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON ECOLOGY & PARKS

**Majority Report:** Do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Fraser, Chair; C. Anderson, Vice Chair; McAuliffe, McDonald, Spanel and Swecker.

**Staff:** David Danner (786-7784)

**Background:** Since 1977, part of the fee paid by grass growers for field burning permits has been allocated to support research on reducing air pollution from burning. The portion allocated is currently \$.50 per acre of land to be burned. The total amount of fees collected for research between 1977 and 1994 was \$326,550.

Before 1991, the Department of Ecology determined what research would be funded. Between 1979 to 1985, it paid \$118,000 to the University of Washington to develop a portable grass seed burning machine. Between 1989 and 1991, it paid \$41,000 to Washington State University (WSU) for continued work on the portable grass seed burning machine.

The 1991 Washington Clean Air Act established the Agricultural Burning Practices and Research Task Force, charged with identifying research needs relating to the adverse effects of the open burning of seed grasses. The Department of Ecology is charged with approving the task force recommendations.

Just prior to the establishment of the task force in 1991, the Department of Ecology shifted its funding from in-state research on the mobile field burner to a dethatching demonstration project conducted by an out-of-state private company, Phoenix Industries of Oregon. It paid the company \$70,800. In 1992, the new task force decided to continue funding the dethatching project through WSU.

**Summary of Bill:** It is mandated that any study authorized by the task force and approved by Department of Ecology must be conducted by Washington State University. WSU is

required to submit a brief report every two years to the appropriate standing committees of the Legislature assessing the potential of its research to result in practical and economical alternatives to grass seed burning.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on February 20, 1995.

**Effective Date:** The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.

**Testimony For:** WSU is capable to conduct quality research on grass burning issues. Mandating that research funded under the Washington Clean Air Act be conducted at WSU assures that state funds remain in the state, and assures accountability by those using public funds for research.

**Testimony Against:** None.

**Testified:** Senator Rasmussen, prime sponsor; Les Clemons, Washington Seed Council.

**House Amendment(s):** WSU may not use more than 8 percent of research funds for administrative overhead. The reporting requirement is terminated once grass seed burning is prohibited. Procedures are established so that City Selection Committee members can vote by mail for air pollution authority board members.