

SENATE BILL REPORT

SSB 6551

As Passed Senate, February 10, 1996

Title: An act relating to agricultural grazing on state-owned and managed lands.

Brief Description: Managing grazing lands.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Natural Resources (originally sponsored by Senators Loveland, Rasmussen, Snyder, Morton, Oke, Prince, A. Anderson, Hargrove, Hochstatter, Winsley and Sellar).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Natural Resources: 1/30/96, 2/2/96 [DPS].
Passed Senate, 2/10/96, 49-0.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6551 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Drew, Chair; Spanel, Vice Chair; A. Anderson, Haugen, Morton, Oke, Snyder, Strannigan and Swecker.

Staff: Vic Moon (786-7469)

Background: The Conservation Commission has adopted standards relating to grazing on state-owned and managed lands based on the requirement of SHB 1309 (1993). There has been some confusion as to the interpretation of the legislative mandate and the Joint Administrative Rules Review Committee asked the Legislature to resolve the problem.

Summary of Bill: The purpose of the act is that all state agricultural grazing and grazable woodlands are managed in keeping with the statutory and constitutional mandates of each state agency. The ecosystem standards adopted in 1993 are not intended to prescribe practices. Land managers are encouraged to use adaptive management in selecting and implementing practices that work towards meeting the standards based on the best available science and evaluation tools. The standards are applied through a collaborative process, which includes the land managers and lessees looking at the land along with state agencies to reach agreement on management and resource objectives. Full discussion of management options must be made, and no land manager gives up his management prerogative.

Efforts are made to make land management plans economically feasible and compatible with the lessee's or land manager's entire operation. Coordinated resource management planning is encouraged where there are multiple ownerships. The Department of Fish and Wildlife is to consider multiple use on its lands and the Department of Natural Resources is to allow multiple use on lands owned and managed by the department. The ecosystem standards are to be achieved by applying land management practices on riparian lands in order to reach desired ecological conditions.

The Legislature urges state agencies to use the coordinated resource management and planning process where there are either multiple ownerships or multiple use resource objectives. In all cases, the use of coordinated resource planning is a voluntary decision by all concerned parties, including the agency's private landowners and other people.

The intent section of House Bill 1309 is codified into statutory law. That intent section states that many wild stocks of salmon are in the state of decline and that bull trout are petitioned for an endangered species listing. The Legislature directs that steps must be taken in areas of fish and wildlife habitat management, water conservation, salmon stock protection and education to prevent further losses.

The Legislature finds that maintenance and restoration of Washington's range lands and shrubs-steppe vegetation is vital to the long-term benefit of the state. The development of coordinated resource management plans that take into consideration the needs of wildlife, fish, livestock, timber production, water quality, and range land conservation improves the stewardship of the lands.

The Legislature finds that there is insufficient technical support for the coordinated resource management process and agencies need to emphasize that process. The purpose of the law is to establish state grazing lands as a model in the state for the development and implementation of standards that can be used in coordinated research management plans for all state-owned grazing lands.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: The Joint Legislative Rules Review Committee has asked the Senate and House Natural Resources Committees to review Substitute House Bill 1309 and develop clarifying language. The original bill before the committee was an attempt to do that but all of the interested parties have gotten together and produced a substitute proposal. That proposal clarifies the intent of 1309 and emphasizes the importance of coordinated resource management planning.

Testimony Against: The act is not necessary. State lands should be managed more strictly than private lands and the requirements for state land management should be more stringent.

Testified: PRO: Scott Barr; Norman McClure; Lauren Stern, Dept. of Fish and Wildlife; Stan Bios, Dept. of Natural Resources; Rick Abbot, Trout Unlimited; Bill Garvin, WA State Farm Bureau; CON: Jeff Parsons, People For Puget Sound.

House Amendment(s): Technical amendments clarify the language.