

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1061

As Reported By House Committee On:
Natural Resources

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: Representatives Sheldon, Mielke and Grant.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Natural Resources: 1/29/97, 2/18/97 [DPS].

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 11 members: Representatives Buck, Chairman; Sump, Vice Chairman; Thompson, Vice Chairman; Regala, Ranking Minority Member; Butler, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Alexander; Anderson; Chandler; Hatfield; Pennington and Sheldon.

Staff: Rick Anderson (786-7114).

Background: The State Parks and Recreation Commission allows metal detectors to be used in specified state parks with certain restrictions. These restrictions are outlined in rules adopted by the commission. In general, these rules describe where, how, and when metal detectors can be used. Park areas that allow the use of metal detectors must be posted as being open to the use of metal detectors. Portions of 66 state parks allow recreational metal detecting.

The State Parks and Recreation Commission employs two full-time archaeologists to identify historic archaeological resources. The commission estimates that approximately 20 percent of the total acreage in the state parks' system has been surveyed for these resources.

Summary of Substitute Bill: By September 1, 1997, the Parks and Recreation Commission must open 200 new acres of state park land for use by recreational metal detectors. For the following five years, the commission must open an additional 50

acres per year to recreational metal detectors. The commission must also develop a cost-effective plan to identify historic resources in at least one state park that has a military fort on Puget Sound. By December 1, 1997, the commission must submit a report to the Legislature identifying the cost of the plan and how it will be implemented.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The original bill provided direction to the Commission as to when it could and could not regulate the recreational use of metal detectors.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: Recreational metal detectors locate metal objects. Historic resources, such as arrow heads, clay pots, and bones, are not detected by the equipment we use. Recreational metal detectors provide a public service by cleaning up beaches and other areas in which we recreate. Most objects we find are located within three inches of the surface. No complaints have been filed on recreational metal detectors in state parks.

Testimony Against: The commission manages 250,000 acres of land. Only 20 percent of those lands have been surveyed for historic resources. Portions of 66 parks and ocean beach areas are currently open to recreational metal detectors. The number of sites available to metal detector groups is increasing as new areas are identified as not having historic resources.

Testified: Representative Tim Sheldon, prime sponsor; Terry Wright, Hood Canal Detectors (pro); and Kathy Smith, Washington State Parks and Recreation (con).