

ANALYSIS OF SSB 5079

House Agriculture & Ecology Committee

March 20, 1997

BACKGROUND:

Any person who owns or operates a facility discharging wastewater to waters of the state must apply for a wastewater discharge permit from the Department of Ecology (DOE). Permits are drafted by DOE staff, with conditions that place limits on the quantity and concentration of contaminants that may be discharged. Public notice and an opportunity to comment is provided for each draft permit and a hearing may be required if there is sufficient public interest. Permits are generally issued for a 5-year period. The department charges fees to recover the costs of administering the permits.

SUMMARY:

Legislative findings are made regarding the benefits of allowing the private preparation of draft wastewater discharge permits.

The DOE must determine for each application for a new or modified wastewater permit whether or not the permit will be processed in 180 days. If the permit will not be processed within 180 days, the DOE must notify the applicant and the applicant may choose to withdraw the application and re-submit the application in the form of a draft permit. The DOE is required to approve or deny the proposed permit within 45 days if no hearing is required, or within 90 days if a hearing is required. The DOE is directed to provide guidelines specifying the elements of a complete draft permit.