

HOUSE BILL REPORT

2SSB 5536

As Reported By House Committee On:
Agriculture & Ecology

Title: An act relating to state forest lands and municipal drinking water protection.

Brief Description: Creating a pilot project for a municipal watershed on state trust lands.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Spanel and Gardner).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Agriculture & Ecology: 3/30/99, 4/2/99 [DP].

Brief Summary of Second Substitute Bill

- Creating a pilot project for water quality improvement in a municipal watershed affected by forest practices.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & ECOLOGY

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 14 members: Representatives G. Chandler, Republican Co-Chair; Linville, Democratic Co-Chair; Cooper, Democratic Vice Chair; Koster, Republican Vice Chair; Anderson; B. Chandler; Delvin; Fortunato; Grant; Reardon; Schoesler; Stensen; Sump and Wood.

Staff: Carole Richmond (786-7114).

Background:

Water quality standards are established pursuant to the state's Water Pollution Control Act (Chapter 90.48 RCW). Compliance with forest practices regulations is intended to achieve compliance with water pollution control laws (RCW 90.48.420). Under law providing for the management of state trust lands, a city or town may request the Department of Natural Resources to alter its land management practices within a watershed that provides drinking water to provide water exceeding water quality

standards established by the Department of Ecology (RCW 79.01.128). If those management practices result in increased costs, reduced revenues, or reduced value of public lands, the city or town requesting such alterations must compensate the department for the difference between meeting the standards and exceeding the standards.

Summary of Bill:

The Department of Natural Resources must initiate a pilot project in the Lake Whatcom watershed to determine what management actions could be taken to achieve water quality standards beyond those required by state law. The department must establish an advisory committee with representatives of state agencies, local governments, and citizens.

The pilot project must be completed by June 30, 2000. All timber sales within the Lake Whatcom watershed must be deferred until the pilot project is complete.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: The concern with timber harvest in the watershed is roads. These state trust lands were obtained from Trillium Corporation in a trade, but they are scheduled for harvest. The pilot would allow the Department of Natural Resources to study whether activities could be undertaken to improve water quality standards beyond those that currently exist. We don't see this as requiring that water quality standards be raised, only that extra care be taken.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Paul Silver; Washington Department of Natural Resources; Ron Schultz, National Audubon Society; and Dick Little, city of Bellingham.