

# House Bill Analysis

## HB 2518

HOUSE AGRICULTURE AND ECOLOGY COMMITTEE

January 28, 2000

### **BACKGROUND:**

Concerns have been raised regarding the increase of gases such as carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, and what effects these increases will have on the earth's climate. Many factors limit the ability to project and detect future climate change, and recommendations have been generated within the scientific community for future study. Although research has been conducted regarding climate change on a global perspective, little information is available regarding regional climate changes and the possible impacts on smaller areas such as Washington State.

### **SUMMARY:**

A Joint Select Committee on Climate Change is created. The committee consists of twenty-four legislators, six from each of the four major caucuses. The twelve members of the House of Representatives are appointed by the Co-Speakers of the House, and the twelve Senate members are appointed by the President of the Senate. In making the appointments, the co-speakers and president must select members representing certain specified committees, as well as the members at-large. Staff support to the committee is provided by the Office of Program Research and Senate Committee Services.

The committee is required to survey the current state of science regarding global climate change and associated regional climate change. The committee must identify steps the public and private sectors may make to plan for, mitigate, or take advantage of the effects of climate change, and identify key areas of uncertainty and opportunities for research.

The committee must consider: possible alterations to the hydrologic cycle, including changes in the quantity and the timing of snowfall and snowpack, rainfall, runoff, peak flows, low flows, and flooding incidents; possible changes to energy supply if changes in the timing and quantity of runoff lead to changes in hydro power production capabilities and changes in energy demand due to warmer winters and hotter summers; possible changes to the state's

ability to produce agricultural commodities due to changes in temperature and precipitation patterns, growing seasons, availability and timing of flows for irrigation, and crop response to increased levels of carbon dioxide; possible alterations to the state's capability to produce forest products, due to changes in temperature, precipitation, and increased carbon dioxide availability, as well as to changes in species mix, and changes related to seedling establishment and regeneration; possible impacts to the state's freshwater, marine, and salmonid fisheries, including effects of changes in lake and stream temperatures, changes in the quantity and timing of flows for fish, and changes in river and estuarine habitat due to sea level rise and changes in flooding incidences; possible impacts to coastal areas and communities due to sea level changes, changes in frequency and intensity of storms and storm surges, changes in flooding potential, and changes to coastal erosion rates and rates of saltwater intrusion into freshwater aquifers; possible risks to human health and safety, including health effects associated with air and water quality changes, changes in disease patterns, and changes to drinking water availability and coastal communities associated with sea level rise; and an inventory of existing research efforts and funding sources, and an identification of important research subjects not currently being addressed.

The committee is also directed to identify existing policies in the state that either enhance or discourage economic development opportunities for Washington companies engaged in energy efficiency and renewable energy resource industries, and include recommendations on any policy changes needed to encourage these industries.

The committee must seek input from higher education faculty members and other knowledgeable parties in carrying out its responsibilities. The committee must report its findings and recommendations to the Legislature by December 1, 2000.

Appropriation:           None

Fiscal Note:             Not requested

Effective Date:         Ninety days after adjournment of regular session.