

House Bill Analysis

HB 2624

HOUSE AGRICULTURE AND ECOLOGY COMMITTEE

February
1, 2000

BACKGROUND:

The flood plain of a river valley frequently contains large amounts of sand and gravel which are mined for commercial use. The removal of the sand and gravel frequently leaves large pits in the ground. If the sand and gravel is mined adjacent to an active river channel, a shift in the water channel can flood these pits and result in less stream flow, less channel stability, displaced silt raising the level of the river bed - which raises the water temperature of the river, and impacts on public works projects.

The State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) requires an environmental impact statement whenever an action will have a probable significant adverse environmental impact. Although local governments have the authority to require an environment impact statement for surface mining activities in flood plains, it has not always been done. Metals mining and milling operations are categorically required to prepare an environmental impact statement.

A surface mine— includes an extraction of minerals that results in more than three acres of disturbed area. Sand and gravel are considered minerals for purposes of surface mining. A flood plain— is defined in section 173-22-030 of the Washington Administrative Code (WAC) as: synonymous with one hundred-year flood plain and means that land area susceptible to being inundated by stream derived waters with a one percent chance of being equaled or exceeded in any given year. The limit of this area shall be based upon flood ordinance regulation maps or a reasonable method which meets the objectives of the act—.

SUMMARY:

An environmental impact statement is categorically required for any new or expanded public or private surface mine, if all or any part of the proposed mine falls within a flood plain as defined by rule.

Appropriation: None

Fiscal Note: Requested

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of regular session