

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2294

As Reported by House Committee On:

Natural Resources
Appropriations

Title: An act relating to recreation sites owned by the department of natural resources.

Brief Description: Allowing the department of natural resources to seek volunteers to maintain recreation sites.

Sponsors: Representatives Hatfield, Doumit, Kessler, Eickmeyer, Lantz, Rockefeller, Wood, Mielke, Boldt, Benson, Edwards, Upthegrove and Dunn.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Natural Resources: 1/25/02 [DP];

Appropriations: 2/6/02, 2/9/02 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Requires the DNR to involve the public prior to closing a recreation site to seek alternatives to closure.
- Expands a volunteer program for the DNR recreation sites similar to the Adopt-a-Highway Program established by the Department of Transportation.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 11 members: Representatives Doumit, Chair; Rockefeller, Vice Chair; Sump, Ranking Minority Member; Buck, Eickmeyer, Ericksen, Jackley, McDermott, Orcutt, Pearson and Upthegrove.

Staff: Bill Lynch (786-7092).

Background:

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) owns a number of recreation sites, and some of these sites are at risk of closing due to insufficient funds. The Adopt-a-Highway Program utilized by the Department of Transportation has been successful in attracting volunteers and a similar program for the DNR recreation sites may allow some of these

sites to remain open.

Summary of Bill:

The DNR must conduct a periodic review of all of its recreation sites. The initial review must be completed by December 1, 2002. The review must include an examination of the location of the sites and the costs associated with them.

If the DNR determines that it is appropriate to keep a site open, but the site may be closed due to insufficient funds, before closing the site the DNR must hold a public hearing in the general vicinity of the site to determine if there are sufficient volunteers available on an ongoing basis to keep the site open.

The DNR is required to seek partnerships with volunteer groups and businesses to establish a recreation site volunteer program. The requirements for the program are similar to the requirements for the Adopt-a-Highway Program.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 21, 2002.

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

Testimony For: This a good opportunity for people to volunteer and help serve their community. One recent meeting concerning a particular camp used for horse-riding drew about 700 people who said they were willing to volunteer to keep it open. This parallels the Adopt-a-Highway Program which works well. People are looking to volunteer to keep access to public lands open. Keeping these areas open also helps bring some additional people and revenue into the community.

Testimony Against: The department is concerned with public safety and liability for the state. The DNR currently uses volunteers in a number of different ways, but there are some things that can't be addressed by volunteers. Some of these recreation sites have had a lot of vandalism and reckless shootings that endanger other people. Temporary closures or seasonal closures are needed to address problems with water systems or toilets. Some sites are located near urban areas and are no longer appropriate for use as department recreation sites.

Testified: (In support) Representative Hatfield, prime sponsor; and Sharon Foster, YMCAs of Washington and Council of Youth Agencies.

(Opposed) Bonnie Bunning, Department of Natural Resources.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 25 members: Representatives Sommers, Chair; Doumit, 1st Vice Chair; Fromhold, 2nd Vice Chair; Sehlin, Ranking Minority Member; Alexander, Boldt, Buck, Clements, Cody, Cox, Dunshee, Grant, Kagi, Kenney, Kessler, Linville, Lisk, Mastin, McIntire, Pearson, Pflug, Ruderman, Schual-Berke, Talcott and Tokuda.

Staff: Jeff Olsen (786-7157).

Summary of Recommendation of Committee On Appropriations Compared to Recommendation of Committee On Natural Resources:

The substitute removes the requirement that the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) conducts a review of its recreation sites by December 2002. The DNR is not required to hold public meetings before closing a recreation site. When considering closing a recreation site, the DNR must involve the public and interested stakeholders. The substitute clarifies that the DNR will expand the volunteer program and may work with federal agencies in developing agreements to perform necessary maintenance at recreation sites. A null and void clause was added, making the act null and void unless specific funding is referenced in the budget.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed. However, the bill is null and void unless funded in the budget.

Testimony For: The DNR supports the substitute version of the bill that addresses previous concerns to ensure safety of volunteers and protect the state from liabilities. Volunteers are currently doing incredible work maintaining DNR recreation sites. The DNR recognizes the value volunteers can add, and new investments and site improvements will lead to savings in the future.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: (In support) Bonnie Bunning, Department of Natural Resources; and Lynn Norden, citizen.