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**Agriculture & Ecology  
Committee**

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**SB 6737**

**Brief Description:** Coordinating implementation of watershed plans.

**Sponsors:** Senator Fraser.

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Allows voluntary watershed organizations formed to implement adopted watershed plans to apply for administrative support grants of up to \$50,000 annually.
- Creates a state Watershed Coordinating Council to provide information sharing and coordination among local watershed organizations and state, federal, and tribal entities.

**Hearing Date:** 2/28/02

**Staff:** Caroleen Dineen (786-7156).

**Background:**

State law establishes procedures and policies for initiating watershed planning at the local level. Watershed planning may be initiated for one or more Water Resource Inventory Areas (WRIAs) watersheds designated by Department of Ecology (DOE) rule through creation of a planning unit to address water quantity issues. Other components may be added to the planning process, such as instream flows, water quality, and fish habitat. The DOE may make grants to planning units for initial organization, watershed assessments, studies of specific multipurpose storage projects, and for plan development and recommendations. Maximum grant amounts for each of these phases are specified in statute.

In 2001 a Monitoring Oversight Committee (Committee) was established to review the progress of watershed-related monitoring and make recommendations. Members of the Committee include the Salmon Recovery Office, the Department of Ecology, the Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Conservation Commission, the Puget Sound Action Team, the Department of Natural Resources, the Department of Transportation, and the Interagency

Committee for Outdoor Recreation. The Committee must submit an interim progress report to the Legislature and the Governor by March 2002, and a final report is due by December 2002.

The Water Resources Act requires the DOE to make reasonable efforts to inform people about water related resources and management. The DOE is also required to invite and encourage participation in water resources programs by private groups and entities and by government agencies. State and local agencies are directed in the Water Resources Act to fully participate in these programs. The DOE is authorized to award grants to state and local agencies to finance water resource activities required by the DOE.

Various statutes include provisions for watershed-based planning, and various private, nonprofit, governmental, and other entities are involved in watershed planning activities, efforts and implementation.

### **Summary of Bill:**

Voluntary watershed organizations formed to implement adopted watershed plans are eligible for grants from the Department of Ecology (DOE) under the state Water Resources Act. For purposes of these grants, "watershed plan" includes plans adopted under the watershed planning statute (chapter 90.82 RCW), habitat conservation plans, requirements of Federal Energy Regulatory Commission licenses, plans adopted pursuant to Puget Sound Water Quality Action grants, or legislative directives.

Voluntary watershed organizations may apply to the DOE for administrative support grants of up to \$50,000 to maintain the organizational structure and functions necessary to fulfill their purpose. The administrative support grants may be renewed annually and can be used for purposes such as compensating staff, obtaining grants, matching funds and in-kind donations and services, recruiting volunteers, providing technical and safety training and safety equipment, acquiring insurance, maintaining required records, and issuing required reports.

Preference for administrative support grants is to be given to organizations that have completed projects successfully, have projects pending, and have established cooperative relationships with citizens, businesses, nonprofit organizations, tribes, local, federal, and state government, and state colleges and universities, as appropriate for the nature and scope of their activities. Requirements for grant applications are specified.

A state Watershed Coordinating Council (Council) is created to provide information sharing and coordination among local watershed organizations and state, federal, and tribal entities. The Council includes between 15 and 25 members appointed by the Governor, with approximately half representing local watershed organizations and the remaining members representing state, federal, and tribal entities and scientists with expertise in watershed health.

Legislative findings recognize the unique character of each watershed in Washington. Legislative findings also specify that watershed management activities and techniques are most effective and efficient at implementation when they fully integrate and utilize the

collaborative efforts of interested citizens and businesses, nonprofit organizations, tribes, federal, state, and local agencies, and state colleges and universities.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not Requested.

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