

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6575

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Natural Resources, Parks & Shorelines, February 6, 2002

Title: An act relating to natural area preserves.

Brief Description: Concerning the designation of certain lands as natural area preserves or natural resource conservation areas.

Sponsors: Senator Hargrove.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Natural Resources, Parks & Shorelines: 2/4/02, 2/6/02 [DPS].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES, PARKS & SHORELINES

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6575 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Jacobsen, Chair; Poulsen, Vice Chair; Hargrove, McDonald, Morton, Oke, Snyder, Spanel and Stevens.

Staff: Victor Moon (786-7469)

Background: The state of Washington has two natural resource conservation programs. The first is the natural resources conservation areas which are established for their outstanding scenic and ecological values, and provide low impact public use. The second is the natural area preserve system which has more limited public access and is an attempt to preserve the best remaining examples of Washington's native ecosystems. There are 47 natural area preserves protecting approximately 26,000 acres in the state of Washington.

Summary of Substitute Bill: The Department of Natural Resources must develop standards for regulating public access to natural area preserves and provide buffer zones with a higher level of public access allowed around environmentally sensitive areas. The department must develop management plans for each area and identify the significant resources to be conserved in that area. The plan must identify specific types of management activities and public uses that are permitted and the plans must be available for public review and comment.

The Natural Heritage Advisory Council must recommend whether new natural areas proposed for protection should be established as natural area preserves, or as natural resource conservation areas, or as a combination of both. The council must also review and comment on management plans proposed by the department.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The language is clarified and the public access issues are more fully addressed.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: This is an important change in the management direction for the natural areas which will give better public access and participation in the planning process.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Jay Sterling, Montesano; Kit Metler, Department of Natural Resources; Len Barson, Nature Conservancy.