

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 6092

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As Reported By Senate Committee On:  
Ways & Means, March 29, 2005

**Title:** An act relating to funding actions taken in response to the declaration of a statewide drought emergency.

**Brief Description:** Responding to the statewide drought emergency.

**Sponsors:** Senators Poulsen, Morton, Prentice and Fraser; by request of Governor Gregoire.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Ways & Means: 3/30/05, 3/29/05 [DP].

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

**Majority Report:** Do pass.

Signed by Senators Prentice, Chair; Doumit, Vice Chair; Fraser, Vice Chair; Zarelli, Ranking Minority Member; Brandland, Fairley, Hewitt, Kohl-Welles, Parlette, Pflug, Pridemore, Rasmussen, Regala, Roach, Rockefeller, Schoesler and Thibaudeau.

**Staff:** Brian Sims (786-7431)

**Background:** The Department of Ecology (DOE) declares drought emergencies by administrative order in Washington. Before it can declare a drought emergency, the DOE must determine an area is: (1) experiencing or expected to experience less than 75 percent of normal water supply; and (2) expected to suffer undue hardships (such as crop failures, municipal water shortages, and fish passage barriers) as a result of the dry conditions. The Governor must provide written approval for Ecology to issue a drought order.

Funding for drought response may be appropriated by the Legislature through the State Emergency Water Projects Revolving Account, which receives revenue from the sale of bonds and may be used only for drought relief activities.

The State Drought Preparedness Account receives revenue from transfers that are specified by the Legislature and is used for drought preparedness activities.

**Summary of Bill:** The bill appropriates funding to the DOE and the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) in response to the declaration of a statewide drought emergency.

Appropriations include:

- 1) \$1.8 million for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2005 from the state general fund for deposit in the State Emergency Water Projects Revolving Account. Funds from the account are provided to the DOE for costs incurred in taking action pursuant to the declaration of a statewide drought emergency;
- 2) \$200,000 for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2005 from the state general fund to the DNR for costs incurred by the DNR to be able to activate fire fighters to respond to the

heightened risk of forest fires pursuant to the declaration of a statewide drought emergency; and

- 3) \$8.2 million for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2005, from the State Taxable Building Construction Account for deposit in the State Drought Preparedness Account in the capital budget for costs incurred by the DOE in responding to the state drought emergency.

The bill also requires that projects or measures for which funding or compensation will be provided must be connected with a water system, water source, or water body which is receiving, or has been projected to receive, less than 75 percent of normal water supply, as the result of natural drought conditions. This reduction in water supply must be such that it is causing, or will cause, undue hardship for the entities or fish or wildlife depending on the water supply.

**Appropriation:** Yes.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

**Committee/Commission/Task Force Created:** No.

**Effective Date:** The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.

**Testimony For:** The bill provides necessary funding to mitigate the effects of the drought, including: acquisition of emergency water rights, leasing water for instream flows, early hiring of fire fighters, processing applications for emergency wells, and staffing for the department's coordination of the drought response.

**Testimony Against:** None.

**Who Testified:** PRO: Brian Walsh, Department of Ecology; Dave Burdick, Department of Ecology.