

SB 5120 - DIGEST

Declares an intent to establish a new state water resource management program for the mainstem of the Columbia river in order to meet the water supply needs of growing communities and the local economies on which they depend, and to do so in a manner that protects and enhances the quality of the natural environment, including streamflows necessary for the preservation of environmental values.

Establishes the Columbia river mainstem water management program. The goals of this water management program are to: (1) Meet the water supply needs of growing communities and the local economies on which they depend by providing a timely and affordable supply of water that will allow for new and reliable uses of water from the Columbia river mainstem; and

(2) Manage water to protect and enhance the quality of the natural environment, including streamflows necessary for the preservation of environmental values by securing and dedicating water to improve streamflows in the river mainstem.

Declares that the objectives of the program are to: (1) Improve the reliability of water rights issued by the department between 1980 and 2003 that are subject to minimum instream flows or other mitigation conditions to protect streamflows;

(2) Improve streamflows during the primary period of fish outmigration on the mainstem; and

(3) Mitigate for the streamflow impacts of future water right permits as provided by the program.

Requires the department to prepare a biennial report on the status of the program. The report shall be transmitted to the appropriate standing committees of the legislature and the governor by December 31st of even-numbered years.

Provides that, ten years after the effective date of this act, and every ten years thereafter, the department shall conduct a formal review of the effectiveness of the program. The review shall include independent evaluations of the economic and scientific information that provide the premises of the program.

Provides that, as part of the biennial report required by this act, the department shall notify the governor and legislature of the timing and proposed process for the formal review and shall request funding to conduct the necessary independent reviews as part of their biennial budget request to the governor. Upon completion of the review, the department shall prepare and transmit a report of the findings of the review, including any recommendations for legislative changes to the program.