
Education Committee

HB 1677

Brief Description: Creating the outdoor education and recreation grant program for schools and others.

Sponsors: Representatives Quall, Rodne, Dunshee, Ormsby, B. Sullivan, Hurst, Chase, Hunt, P. Sullivan, Pettigrew, Lovick, Jarrett, McCoy, Anderson, Upthegrove, Santos, Sells, Conway and Rolfes.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Establishes an outdoor education and recreation grant program under the authority of the Parks and Recreation Commission.

Hearing Date: 2/15/07

Staff: Andrew Colvin (786-7304).

Background:

The common schools in Washington are required to provide instruction in a variety of subject areas, including science. Essential Academic Learning Requirements (EALRs) and Grade Level Expectations for science have been established, and beginning with the graduating class of 2010, students must pass the science content area of the Washington Assessment of Student Learning to graduate from high school. In addition, instruction is required at all grade levels about conservation, natural resources, and the environment.

The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) currently administers a natural science, wildlife, and environmental education partnership account and grant program. The program's purpose is to promote proven and innovative natural science, wildlife, and environmental education programs that are fully aligned with the EALRs. In 2006, legislation was enacted requiring OSPI to conduct an environmental education study in partnership with public and private entities that promote quality environmental education experiences. The study must be completed by October 1, 2007.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

The Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission is responsible for the acquisition, operation, enhancement, and protection of recreational, cultural, historical, and natural sites. These sites include 120 developed parks, as well as recreation programs, such as trails, boating safety, and winter recreation.

Summary of Bill:

The Legislature intends to establish an outdoor education and recreation program. The purpose of the program is to improve students' performance on the Essential Academic Learning Requirements for science through participation in outdoor educational and recreational opportunities.

The outdoor education and recreation program account is created in the custody of the state treasurer, and the account may receive funds from any source, including gifts, grants, and donations. Subject to the availability of funds in the account, the Outdoor Education and Recreation Grant Program (grant program) is created within the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission (the Commission). The Commission shall establish and implement the program by rule, with the objective of involving public agencies, private organizations, and individuals in efforts to provide outdoor education and recreation programs (programs) for students.

Beginning with schools that are most in need in suburban, rural, and urban areas, the grant program should focus on low income students, and those in danger of failing academically or dropping out of school. The Director of the Commission shall set priorities and develop criteria for awarding grants to programs. In doing so, the Director shall consider certain specified characteristics of the applying programs, and shall consider state parks as venues and use of the Commission's personnel as a resource.

The Director must create an advisory committee with representatives from various specified agencies, the business community, outdoor organizations with an interest in education, and any others the Commission deems appropriate. The advisory committee shall assist and advise the Commission in the development and administration of the grant program.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.