

General Government Appropriations Committee

HB 3122

Brief Description: Authorizing the department of natural resources to recover costs for data delivery services provided under the natural heritage program.

Sponsors: Representatives Darneille, Hunt, McCoy, Upthegrove and Dunshee; by request of Commissioner of Public Lands.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires the Department of Natural Resources to charge fees for the recovery of service costs related to the Washington Natural Heritage Program.

Hearing Date: 2/2/10

Staff: Owen Rowe (786-7391).

Background:

In 1981, the Legislature amended the Natural Area Preserves Act and established the Washington Natural Heritage Program (WNHP) within the Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

The WNHP manages site-specific and species/ecosystem-specific information on priority species and ecosystems; those that are rare or have very limited distribution.

The WNHP's mandate is to:

- identify which species and ecosystems are priorities for conservation effort;
- build and maintain a database for priority species and ecosystems; and
- share the information with others so that it can be used for environmental assessments and conservation planning purposes.

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 data is used by a number of agencies, organizations, companies, and individuals for conservation planning, environmental review processes, and other information requests.

Summary of Bill:

In order to recover the service costs incurred for staff time and expenses, the WNHP must charge a \$6,000 annual subscription fee or a \$100 access fee per request, plus a charge of \$75 per hour to process and respond to a data request. The fees are deposited into the Natural Resources Conservation Areas Stewardship Account. The WNHP may waive the fees when a data request requires less than one hour of response time or when no data is provided. The DNR may also adjust or modify the fees as necessary to recover service costs.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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