
**Agriculture & Natural Resources
Committee**

HB 1391

Brief Description: Regarding the use of water delivered from the federal Columbia basin project.

Sponsors: Representatives Warnick, Haler, Fagan, Schmick, Chandler, McCune, Armstrong, Condotta, Johnson, Hinkle and Parker.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Modifies the allowable quantity of water permitted for irrigation in circumstances where a person has a groundwater right within a subarea using surface water from the Columbia Basin Project.

Hearing Date: 2/2/11

Staff: Courtney Barnes (786-7194).

Background:

Columbia Basin Project.

The Columbia Basin Project (Project) of the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Bureau) receives its waters from Franklin D. Roosevelt Lake behind Grand Coulee Dam. The Department of Ecology (Department) has entered an agreement with the Bureau and has adopted rules for managing certain comingled waters associated with the Project. Under these rules, the Department may issue water use permits.

Groundwater Management Subareas.

A groundwater management subarea (subarea) may be established by rule by the Department to address aquifer levels and to regulate withdrawals of public groundwater. The Department has

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adopted rules establishing the WAC 508-14 Subarea, the Odessa Subarea, and the Quincy Subarea. Parts of these subareas include lands within the boundaries of the Project.

In 2004, the Legislature granted the Department the authority to enter into agreements with the Bureau and the Project irrigation districts to offset aquifer depletions due to groundwater withdrawals. Such agreements allow surface water conserved within currently served Project areas to be delivered to deep well irrigated lands in subareas within Project boundaries. Where such deliveries occur, the Department must issue a superseding water right permit or certificate to indicate that the unused portion of a replaced subarea groundwater right is a reserve right with low flow protection from relinquishment.

This reserve right may again be used if the delivery of conserved Project water is curtailed or otherwise unavailable. The total acreage irrigated under the subarea groundwater right and delivered Project water must not exceed quantity or acreage limits described in the groundwater permit or certificate.

Summary of Bill:

The bill modifies the allowable quantity of water permitted for irrigation in circumstances where a person has a groundwater right within a subarea using surface water from the Project. The total acreage irrigated under the subarea groundwater right and delivered Project water must not exceed the quantity of water authorized by the Bureau or acreage limits described in the groundwater permit or certificate.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on 1/28/11.

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