

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 5403

As Reported By House Committee On:
Natural Resources

Title: An act relating to the Washington state horse park.

Brief Description: Establishing the Washington state horse park.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Ecology & Parks (originally sponsored by Senators Fraser, A. Anderson, Rasmussen, Prince, Spanel, Morton, Loveland, Swecker, Snyder, Palmer, Owen, Quigley and Roach).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Natural Resources: 3/28/95, 3/29/95 [DPA].

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 15 members: Representatives Fuhrman, Chairman; Buck, Vice Chairman; Pennington, Vice Chairman; Basich, Ranking Minority Member; Regala, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Beeksma; Cairnes; Elliot; G. Fisher; Jacobsen; Romero; Sheldon; Stevens; B. Thomas and Thompson.

Staff: Linda Byers (786-7129).

Background: The state has expressed interest in the concept of a state horse park since the mid-1980s, when a Department of Agriculture study requested by the Legislature recommended creation of a state-owned and operated equestrian center. The Washington State Horse Council began pursuing development of the concept with the State Parks and Recreation Commission in the late 1980s. In 1990, the commission completed a feasibility study of creating a publicly-owned, year-around equestrian facility. The initial site identified for development was property adjacent to Lewis and Clark State Park in Lewis County.

In 1991, the Legislature appropriated \$200,000 to the commission for planning an equestrian center at Lewis and Clark State Park and also provided funding to the commission through the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program to begin acquiring parcels adjacent to the park. In 1992, the original site was found to be unsuitable. A site currently under consideration is a few miles from the original site.

Part of the area is in private ownership, and part of the proposed site is in state ownership under the management of the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Use of this site for the horse park would require transferring a parcel from DNR management to the State Parks and Recreation Commission's management through the state's trust land transfer program and reconveyance of forest board transfer lands to Lewis County for public park purposes.

Summary of Amended Bill: The Washington State Horse Park is established, to be located at a site approved by the State Parks and Recreation Commission. It is the intent of the Legislature that the horse park be developed in stages, based on factors such as the availability of funds, equipment, and other materials donated by private sources, the availability and willingness of volunteers to work on park development, and the availability of revenues generated by the park as it is developed and utilized. The Legislature encourages the commission to provide a long-term lease of the selected property at minimal charge to the Washington State Horse Park Authority, with provisions in the lease ensuring public access and use of horse park facilities, provided that the facility remains available primarily for horse-related activities. The Legislature also encourages the county to provide a long-term lease of selected county-owned property for the horse park at a minimal charge.

A nonprofit corporation called the Washington State Horse Park Authority may be formed to carry out the purposes of this legislation. The authority is responsible for development, promotion, operation, management, and maintenance of the horse park. The articles of incorporation for the authority shall provide for a seven-member board of directors, to be appointed by the Governor. One board member is to represent the interests of the State Parks and Recreation Commission; one board member is to represent the interests of the county in which the park is located, and five board members are to represent the diversity of equestrian interests in the state.

The authority may exercise the general powers authorized for a nonprofit corporation; however, the authority may not issue bonds. The authority is specifically authorized to hire and fire employees, accept gifts and grants, establish and collect fees, insure its obligations and potential liability, enter into cooperative agreements, and grant concessions and leases at the horse park. All debts of the authority shall be in the name of the authority and shall not be debts of the state of Washington.

If the authority and state agencies find it mutually beneficial to do so, they may collaborate and cooperate on projects of state interest. The authority shall cooperate with 4-H clubs, pony clubs, youth groups, and local parks departments to provide youth recreational activities. The authority shall also provide for preferential use of an area of the horse park facility for youth and people with disabilities at nominal cost.

Amended Bill Compared to Substitute Bill: The substitute bill encourages the authority to work with youth groups and to provide for preferential use of an area of the horse park for youth and people with disabilities at a nominal cost. The amended bill requires the authority to do so. The amended bill also further clarifies that the authority is not a state agency.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not Requested.

Effective Date of Amended Bill: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: We want to be able to set up the Horse Park Authority. We are still negotiating about the land. This will bring dollars into the state. The authority is now trying to be a private nonprofit, which would put us an additional arm's length from the state and reduce any risk even further. We do a lot of educating on treating the ground lightly, and the park would be a good place for this kind of training. We will be happy to do volunteer work for the park. State Parks supports this.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Karen Munro and Kay Sabich, Washington State Horse Park Foundation; Lothar Pinkers, Washington State Horse Council; Rich Wagner, Backcountry Horsemen of Washington; and Russ Cahill, Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission.