

FINAL BILL REPORT

SSJM 8015

As Passed Legislature

Brief Description: Requesting a variance in order to preserve man-made wetlands.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Ecology & Parks (originally sponsored by Senators Fraser, Swecker, Oke, McDonald, Wojahn, Deccio, McAuliffe, Hargrove, Rasmussen and Winsley).

Senate Committee on Ecology & Parks
House Committee on Agriculture & Ecology

Background: The Centralia Mining Company operates a surface coal mine at a site located outside the city of Centralia. The coal produced at the mine is sold to the Centralia Steam Plant which supplies power to Seattle City Light, Tacoma City Light, Snohomish County PUD, and other utilities throughout the Northwest.

Surface coal mining operations are regulated under the federal Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act. Under the act, the Office of Surface Mining within the Department of Interior has adopted regulations that establish standards for the operation and reclamation of surface coal mines. Coal mine operators are required to obtain a permit ensuring that the operation meets the federal standards. In Washington State, permits are obtained directly from the Office of Surface Mining.

Permits for surface coal mines include extensive requirements for reclamation of a site after mining operations are complete. Among these requirements, mine operators are generally required to return the site to the topography and drainage patterns that existed prior to the mining activity.

Summary: Findings are made regarding the importance of preserving wetlands for wildlife habitat, and of certain wetlands created at the site of the Centralia Mining Company's mine in Centralia.

The President of the United States, the Congress, and the Department of the Interior are asked to continue encouraging the Office of Surface Mining to: (1) find ways to preserve wetlands of significant size and value that are created as a result of substantial surface mining activities; (2) recognize the climatic differences in surface mining operations in regions throughout the nation; and (3) allow the states to encourage local mining industries to take advantage of opportunities to preserve and enhance wetlands for the benefit of wildlife, fisheries, and recreation.

Votes on Final Passage:

Senate	47	0
House	97	0