

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5565

As of February 8, 1999

Title: An act relating to measuring water withdrawals for purposes of water conservation.

Brief Description: Requiring measuring of water withdrawals for conservation purposes.

Sponsors: Senator Fraser.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Environmental Quality & Water Resources: 2/9/99.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY & WATER RESOURCES

Staff: Genevieve Pisarski (786-7488)

Background: In Washington, 20 stocks of wild salmon, steelhead, and bull trout have been listed or are under consideration to be listed as threatened or endangered under the federal Endangered Species Act. Activities that affect the habitat of these species include withdrawals of water that reduce stream flow.

The Water Resources Act, its amendments, and ensuing laws establish fundamental water resources policies for the state; declare maintenance of fish habitat to be a beneficial use of water; require collection and management of data; establish a comprehensive state water resources program; call for water use efficiency and planning by public water systems, local governments, and watershed units; and encourage use of reclaimed water.

Measurement of withdrawal is a mandatory condition for all new surface water rights and may be required for existing surface water rights and new ground water permits.

Summary of Bill: Accurate measurement is declared essential for management and conservation of limited water resources.

Where there are listings under the Endangered Species Act and water is needed for in-stream flow, both new and existing surface and ground water rights must measure their withdrawal and irrigation systems serving 10 or more farms at the headgate. The Department of Ecology must prescribe methods, reporting, and any exemptions by rule.

Under the same conditions, all public water systems with 15 or more connections must measure at the connection. The Department of Health must prescribe methods, reporting, and any exemptions by rule.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 28, 1999.

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