

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5687

As of February 11, 1999

Title: An act relating to watershed planning.

Brief Description: Changing watershed planning provisions.

Sponsors: Senator Fraser.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Environmental Quality & Water Resources: 2/12/99.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY & WATER RESOURCES

Staff: Genevieve Pisarski (786-7488)

Background: Legislation adopted in 1997 and 1998 created local watershed planning for the purpose of managing water resources and protecting existing water rights. Through the watershed planning process, local governments assess the status of water resources within a Water Resources Inventory Area (WRIA) and determine how to manage them.

Watershed planning can be initiated only by unanimous agreement of all counties within the WRIA, the largest city or town, and the largest water supply utility. These initiating governments can then invite Indian tribes with reservation lands in the management area to participate.

Local watershed planning must address water quantity and water supply, and it may address water quality, habitat, and stream flow.

Summary of Bill: The Legislature finds that the public, all water related interests, state, federal, and tribal government should also participate in watershed planning.

The definition of "water supply utility" is expanded to include any supplier of water.

Watershed plans are required to be consistent with water cleanup plans and activities, salmon recovery plans and projects, and regional water supply coordination plans.

Tribal governments with reservation lands or fishing rights within the WRIA are included as initiating governments. A tribal government must consent to having water use or water rights on reservation lands addressed in water supply strategies.

An estimate of water quantity for watershed planning purposes cannot be used to legally determine or quantify water rights.

If a watershed planning unit has chosen to address instream flows, the Department of Ecology must provide relevant information on stream segments that support listed species

for which flow is a limiting factor and that lack current flow rules. The department and the unit must develop a schedule for finalizing the unit's recommendations that is consistent with the state's salmon recovery strategy.

If a watershed planning unit has chosen to address water quality, the department must provide for timely inclusion of the unit's recommendations in its total maximum daily load implementation activities.

The initiating governments must unanimously approve a watershed plan.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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