

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1840

As Reported by House Committee On:
Natural Resources, Ecology & Parks

Title: An act relating to providing dedicated funding from the water quality account for lake restoration and management.

Brief Description: Modifying use of the water quality account.

Sponsors: Representatives Kilmer, Lantz, Talcott, Appleton, Holmquist, Hunt, Green, Williams, Buck and Haler.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Natural Resources, Ecology & Parks: 2/25/05, 3/1/05 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Dedicates up to 25 percent of the Centennial Clean Water Act Grant program for funding activities in freshwater systems for two biennia.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES, ECOLOGY & PARKS

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 11 members: Representatives B. Sullivan, Chair; Upthegrove, Vice Chair; Buck, Ranking Minority Member; Kretz, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Blake, DeBolt, Dickerson, Eickmeyer, Hunt, Orcutt and Williams.

Staff: Jason Callahan (786-7117).

Background:

The Water Quality Account (Account) is an appropriated account that is administered by the Department of Ecology (Department). The money in the Account is used for grants and loans to public bodies for water pollution control activities. During the current biennium only, money in the account may also be used for processing certain water rights applications and for technical assistance in watershed planning.

Money in the Account comes primarily from certain identified tax receipts. These revenue sources include a portion of the state tax on cigarettes and other tobacco products and the state sales and use taxes on materials that become part of a water pollution control facility. The Account may also retain revenue generated by interest on any loans that are made from the Account's balance.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

Up to 25 percent of the money in the Account dedicated to the Centennial Clean Water Act Grant program is required to be used for freshwater systems funding for the bienniums ending in 2007 and 2009. Money spent under this provision must be prioritized for a comprehensive lake management program. These efforts can include:

- lake restoration;
- improvement of lake water;
- control of lake eutrophication;
- clearing, prevention, and control of harmful algal blooms in lakes; and
- eradication and prevention of invasive plant and animal species in lakes.

The Department is required to submit a report after the funding priority expires that evaluates the demand and need for continued funding.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The original bill required 10 percent of the Account to be used indefinitely for a comprehensive lake management program.

Appropriation: None.**Fiscal Note:** Available.**Effective Date of Substitute Bill:** The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.**Testimony For:** (In support of original bill) Local citizens are interested in improving lakes that are being choked with invasive weeds and algae. Washington was once a national leader for funding lake water quality, but the state's prestige in the area has been slipping. A steady funding source is key to addressing lake water quality issues. The state needs to reassert its leadership role in this area.

The state needs a comprehensive program to address lake management that prioritizes lakes with a high potential for infestation. Techniques for lake management have improved over time, but many regulations do not take these improvements into consideration.

Testimony Against: (Opposed to original bill) The proposed set aside to the Account is just too high of a value. The balance in the Account has been shrinking as it is, and it has been used for many purposes recently that were not inline with the Account's original purpose. The current work being funded is just as important as the uses proposed in the bill. Other uses should be considered on a competitive basis with current uses to make sure the money is being spent most wisely. In addition, local governments rely on money in the Account for important water quality work.

A better solution would be to increase the amount on money in the Account, not make arbitrary directions as to how the money should be used. If not, the deduction should come in a proviso so that it does not go on forever.

Persons Testifying: (In support of original bill) Representative Kilmer, prime sponsor; Eugene B. Welch, Washington Lake Protection Association; and Ken Parker and Ken Spohn, Citizens for Improving Long Lake.

(Opposed to original bill) Melodie Selby, Department of Ecology; Ed Thorpe, Coalition for Clean Water; Paul Parker, Washington Association of Counties; and Bruce Wishart, People for Puget Sound.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.