
**Natural Resources, Ecology &
Parks Committee**

HB 3237

Brief Description: Reviewing the funding and management of state aquatic lands.

Sponsors: Representatives Hunter, Eickmeyer, Simpson, Grant, Linville, Hankins and Jarrett.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Directs the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee to conduct a performance audit of the Department of Natural Resources' Aquatics Resources Program.

Hearing Date: 2/2/06

Staff: Jeff Olsen (786-7157).

Background:

The Legislature created the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) in 1957 and granted it the responsibility for managing the state's aquatic lands for the benefit of the public. The DNR manages over two million acres of tidelands, shorelands, and bedlands. This includes the beds of all navigable rivers and lakes, along with the beds below the Puget Sound.

The management of aquatic lands must support a balance of goals, including the encouragement of public access, the fostering of water-dependent uses, the utilization of renewable resources, and the generation of revenue. Revenues generated from the state's aquatic lands are used to support the Aquatic Resources Program and are also used for public benefits, such as shoreline access, environmental protection, and recreational opportunities.

Depending on the source of the revenues, moneys received from aquatic lands are deposited in the Aquatic Land Enhancement Account (ALEA) and the Resource Management Cost Account (RMCA). According to the 2005 Annual Report published by the DNR, approximately 58 percent of the moneys generated from aquatic lands were deposited in the ALEA, and 42 percent were deposited in the RMCA. The total revenues collected in 2005 for both accounts total \$18.4 million, with \$10.7 deposited in the ALEA and \$7.7 million deposited in the RMCA.

Summary of Bill:

The Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee (JLARC) must conduct a performance audit of the DNR's Aquatic Resources Program (Program) to determine the success of the DNR in meeting the objectives established in statute for managing aquatic lands. The JLARC must also

review management policies to determine if decisions to generate revenues to support the Program are consistent with policies established in statute. In conducting the review, the JLARC must also review the percentage of revenues retained by the DNR from the RMCA and the ALEA for the Program to determine if the percentages are appropriate to support the Program. The JLARC must also make recommendations on whether the use of other revenues, such as the state general fund, would provide a better funding mechanism for the management of state-owned aquatic lands. The final performance audit and recommendations must be completed by December 15, 2007.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on 2/1/06.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.