

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 2416

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Natural Resources, Ocean & Recreation, February 24, 2006
Ways & Means, February 27, 2006

Title: An act relating to state park fees.

Brief Description: Concerning state park fees.

Sponsors: House Committee on Natural Resources, Ecology & Parks (originally sponsored by Representatives Kessler, Hasegawa, Hunt, Haigh, McIntire, Dunshee, B. Sullivan and Takko).

Brief History: Passed House: 2/13/06, 94-2.

Committee Activity: Natural Resources, Ocean & Recreation: 2/20/06, 2/24/06 [DP-WM, DNP].

Ways & Means: 2/27/06 [DPA, w/oRec].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES, OCEAN & RECREATION

Majority Report: Do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Doumit, Vice Chair; Fraser, Hargrove, Morton and Spanel.

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senators Jacobsen, Chair and Swecker.

Staff: Curt Gavigan (786-7437)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Majority Report: Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators Prentice, Chair; Fraser, Vice Chair, Capital Budget Chair; Doumit, Vice Chair, Operating Budget; Fairley, Pridemore, Rasmussen, Roach, Rockefeller and Thibaudeau.

Minority Report: That it be referred without recommendation.

Signed by Senator Regala.

Staff: Kirstan Arestad (786-7708)

Background: The State Parks and Recreation Commission (Commission) is responsible for the care, charge, control, and supervision of all Washington State parks. Specifically included in those statutes assigning the Commission duties and authorities is the authority to "charge such fees for services, utilities, and use of facilities as the Commission shall deem proper."

The Commission began collecting a parking fee statewide in January 2003. A Natural Investment Permit is a daily or annual permit for vehicle parking, watercraft launching, or use

of a trailer dump station. The daily permit fee is \$7 and the annual permit fee is \$70, but these fees are discounted to \$5 daily and \$50 annually until 2008. Monies from permit sales are deposited in the State Parks Renewal and Stewardship Account, which may be used for park operations, development and renovation, deferred maintenance, park enhancement, and other park purposes.

Summary of Amended Bill: The Commission is prohibited from charging fees for general park access or parking.

Amended Bill Compared to Original Bill: The amendment provides for an effective date of July 1, 2006.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Testimony For (Natural Resources, Ocean & Recreation): The statewide charging of parking fees, beginning in 2003, was an attempt to increase funding for state parks, but attendance has dropped dramatically since then. Parking fees have the greatest impact on the poor. Additionally, these fees have not brought in enough money to make a sufficient dent in park funding needs. Instead, the fees have served as an attendance barrier and are in conflict with this state's history of free park access. Although there is no problem with repealing park fees now, it is important to ensure a secure long term funding source for state parks.

Testimony Against (Natural Resources, Ocean & Recreation): The parking fee allowed state parks to get through potential budget shortfalls over the last few years. This bill should not move out of committee unless adequate backfill money is secured in the budget.

Testimony Other: If the parking fees are going to be removed, an adequate funding source must be found to preserve state parks and state park jobs.

Who Testified (Natural Resources, Ocean & Recreation): PRO: Rep. Kessler; Juelie Alzell, Jeff Chapman, Michael Kirshenbaum, Backcountry Horsemen of Washington; Jean P. Dunbar, George Randels, Nora Porter, Fort Warden Advisory Council.

CON: Jim King, Citizens for Parks and Recreation.

OTHER: Bev Hermanson, WFSE.

Testimony For (Ways & Means): None.

Testimony Against (Ways & Means): None.

Who Testified (Ways & Means): No one.