

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6549

As of February 6, 2014

Title: An act relating to creating demonstration projects for preserving agricultural land and public infrastructure in flood plains.

Brief Description: Creating demonstration projects for preserving agricultural land and public infrastructure in flood plains.

Sponsors: Senators Hobbs, Hatfield and Pearson.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Agriculture, Water & Rural Economic Development: 2/06/14.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, WATER & RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Staff: Diane Smith (786-7410)

Background: Rivers are receiving deposits of gravel and other sedimentation from up stream. This is causing the river beds to rise and the water levels, consequently, to rise. This is putting some rivers over and under their dikes, and flooding and eroding lands adjacent to them. This erosion and channel relocation affects farm and dairy lands as well as previously planted riparian buffers, public highways, and public access. Another consequence of sedimentation is that some river deltas are becoming essentially channel-less, turning into areas threaded by numerous rivulets. This can impede fish runs.

Summary of Bill: The Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) and the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) must jointly convene a stakeholder group to examine the experience in river management of Canada's Fraser River. The group must then set benchmarks and a timetable for the group's progress toward reaching the goals of protection of agricultural lands, restoration or enhancement of fish runs, and protection of public infrastructure and recreational access.

The stakeholder group must develop and implement the two demonstration projects that test various sediment management strategies and techniques to reach these goals; one demonstration project is in Grays Harbor County and one is in Whatcom County.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Any gravel removed by a project must be used, at the discretion of WSDA and DNR, for local fish programs, by adjacent property owners, or by a local tribe for its use or sale.

Reporting to the Legislature is required by December 31, 2014, and annually thereafter.

Staffing is provided jointly by WSDA and DNR.

Funding is first from federal grants, then federal loans, state grants and loans, and private donations.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 4, 2014.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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