

SENATE BILL REPORT

HB 1983

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Agriculture, Water, Natural Resources & Parks, February 28, 2020

Title: An act relating to natural resource management activities.

Brief Description: Concerning natural resource management activities.

Sponsors: Representatives Maycumber, Kretz and Walsh.

Brief History: Passed House: 2/12/20, 91-6.

Committee Activity: Agriculture, Water, Natural Resources & Parks: 2/20/20, 2/28/20
[DPA, w/oRec].

Brief Summary of Amended Bill

- Authorizes the Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) to use the best available land management techniques to manage acquired lands, and requires DFW to develop mitigation actions where appropriate.
- Allows DFW to use specific land management techniques without preparing an environmental impact statement.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, WATER, NATURAL RESOURCES & PARKS

Majority Report: Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators Van De Wege, Chair; Salomon, Vice Chair; Warnick, Ranking Member; Honeyford, McCoy and Short.

Minority Report: That it be referred without recommendation.

Signed by Senator Rolfes.

Staff: Jeff Olsen (786-7428)

Background: DFW may acquire and manage state lands as part of its mandate to protect and preserve the state's fish and wildlife resources while providing sustainable recreational and commercial opportunities. DFW currently owns or manages about 1 million acres in 33 wildlife areas, along with 700 public water-access sites.

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.

The State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) establishes a review process for state and local governments to evaluate environmental impacts from project permits and other government decisions. The SEPA process involves the completion of an environmental checklist by a lead agency and coordination with other governments and agencies as applicable. Some projects may require the preparation of an environmental impact statement (EIS). Information collected during the SEPA process may be used to adjust project proposals to reduce potential environmental impacts. Certain actions are exempt from the SEPA requirements to submit an environmental checklist or to prepare an EIS.

Summary of Amended Bill: DFW may manage its acquired lands using the best available land management techniques. These techniques include:

- licenses or approvals to move firewood or for brush picking;
- periodic application of Department of Agriculture-approved chemicals by licensed personnel;
- issuance of right-of-way easements and use permits to use existing roads in nonresidential areas;
- issuance of grazing leases covering a section of land or less; and
- issuance of grazing leases for land that has been subject to a grazing lease within the previous ten years.

Land management activities under this authority are exempt from the requirement to prepare an EIS under the SEPA, and DFW has a duty to develop mitigation actions where appropriate.

EFFECT OF AGRICULTURE, WATER, NATURAL RESOURCES & PARKS COMMITTEE AMENDMENT(S):

- Specifies the issuance of new grazing leases covering a section of land or less or the issuance of a grazing lease for land that has been subject to a lease within the previous ten years are natural resource management activities exempt from the requirements to prepare an environmental impact statement under the State Environmental Policy Act.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on House Bill: *The committee recommended a different version of the bill than what was heard.* PRO: There have been a significant number of fires in the Loomis, and in areas where agencies have done proper maintenance, including allowing grazing and removing fuel, compared to areas that were not treated, the habitat survived. With proper maintenance on a small scale natural habitats can be saved. Lands need to be properly managed for the benefit of future generations to enjoy.

OTHER: Most management techniques described in the bill are currently exempt from SEPA. WDFW manages over 50 grazing permits to manage vegetation to benefit wildlife and watefowl. WDFW would use its grazing evaluation framework to analyze environmental impacts of any potential new grazing actions and develop appropriate mitigation where needed.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Jacquelin Maycumber, Prime Sponsor.

OTHER: Paul Dahmer, Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.