

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 6380

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As of January 28, 2020

**Title:** An act relating to examining the costs and benefits of making changes to the Hiram M. Chittenden locks, Skagit river hydroelectric project, and Ravenna creek.

**Brief Description:** Examining the costs and benefits of making changes to the Hiram M. Chittenden locks, Skagit river hydroelectric project, and Ravenna creek.

**Sponsors:** Senator Ericksen.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Environment, Energy & Technology: 1/28/20.

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Requires the Department of Commerce to examine and report on the economic and environmental costs and benefits of dismantling the Hiram M. Chittenden locks, breaching or removing the dams in the Seattle City Light Skagit River hydroelectric project, and restoring Ravenna Creek to flow above ground.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT, ENERGY & TECHNOLOGY

**Staff:** Kimberly Cushing (786-7421)

**Background:** Hiram M. Chittenden Locks. In 1917, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers completed construction of the Lake Washington Ship Canal and Hiram M. Chittenden Locks—known locally as the Ballard Locks. The canal and locks connect the waters of Lake Washington and Lake Union to the tidal waters of Puget Sound, allowing recreational and commercial vessels to travel between these bodies of water.

Skagit River Hydroelectric Project. The Skagit River hydroelectric project is located in Whatcom County and consists of three power generating developments on the Skagit River—Ross, Diablo, and Gorge. The three developments are hydraulically coordinated to act as a single project and supply approximately 20 percent of Seattle City Light's power requirements.

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*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.*

Ravenna Creek. Ravenna Creek once carried water from Green Lake to Lake Washington. The creek was cut off in 1911 when Green Lake was lowered 7 feet and separated from Lake Washington in the 1950s and 1960s when it was piped into the county sewage system to accommodate development. Between 2005 and 2006, the Ravenna Creek Daylighting Project resurfaced 650 feet of Ravenna Creek. The remainder of the creek water was piped to Union Bay.

**Summary of Bill:** The Department of Commerce must examine the economic and environmental costs and benefits of dismantling the Hiram M. Chittenden locks, breaching or removing the dams in the Seattle City Light Skagit River hydroelectric project, and restoring Ravenna Creek to flow above ground.

A report on the results of the examination is due January 1, 2021, and must be completed within existing resources.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on January 18, 2020.

**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:** PRO: Last year the Legislature allocated \$700,000 to study the removal of the Snake River Dams. It is important for the people of King County and Seattle to take a look in their own backyard before going into rural areas. Building the locks drained critical wetland areas. Seattle once had a major salmon spawning stream. Ravenna Creek should have a 200-foot buffer and all be daylighted in order for Seattle to lead on environmental restoration. The dams on the Skagit River provide electricity but no navigable waters; they are single purpose dams.

OTHER: The wheat growers do not support breaching the dams in the bill. We support reliable, clean energy. Removing dams on either side of the state would eliminate a huge percentage of clean energy. We appreciate the dialog this bill creates to address the needs and welfare of people who live in these areas. The concern about breaching dams and the recovery of salmon and Orcas is not an eastside or westside problem but a state problem. Why does not Seattle fix its own problems before telling everyone else how to do something? From any metric around, habitat in Seattle is a mess. Removing the locks would tear the heart out of Seattle just like it would in eastern Washington if the Snake River Dams were breached. Half of the money left to study the Snake River Dams could be spent on Puget Sound projects. If you want to see the impact of runoff and temperatures and climate change, look at the Ballard Locks.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Senator Doug Ericksen, Prime Sponsor.

OTHER: Jim Jesernig, Washington Potato and Onion Association, Washington Grain Commission; Todd Myers, Washington Policy Center; Diana Carlen, Washington Association of Wheat Growers.

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