
**Innovation, Community & Economic
Development, & Veterans Committee**

HB 2445

Brief Description: Concerning the leasing authority of the state parks and recreation commission.

Sponsors: Representative Ryu.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Removes limitations on State Parks and Recreation Commission's lease terms and conditions for Saint Edward State Park.

Hearing Date: 1/23/24

Staff: Martha Wehling (786-7067).

Background:

The State Parks and Recreation Commission (Commission) controls and supervises more than 140 state parks throughout Washington. The Commission's duties include the use, care, and administration of state parks and parkways, including granting concessions and leases.

The Commission is required to grant concessions or leases in state parks and parkways upon such rentals, fees, or percentage of income or profits and for such terms and conditions as approved by the Commission. Lease and concession terms must not be longer than 80 years. When an applicant proposes to lease parkland or state park property for more than 20 years, or when a lease is amended or modified, at least five of the seven Commission members must affirmatively approve the lease. Both concessions and leases may be modified during their term if the Commission opines that the modification is in the best interest of the state and the concessionaire or lessee consents.

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

The maximum lease term for certain property at the 326-acre Saint Edward State Park is 62 years. The lease is restricted to certain areas of the park, including the main seminary building, the pool building, the gymnasium, the parking lot between the prior three buildings, the parking lot north of the gymnasium, and associated property immediately adjacent to the preceding areas.

Before entering into a lease at Saint Edward State Park, the Commission was required to find that the Department of Commerce study (Commerce study) issued in July 2016 failed to identify an economically viable public or nonprofit use for the property that was consistent with the Commission's mission and able to proceed on a reasonable timeline. The Commerce study found no active public/nonprofit development proposals to evaluate, and no public or nonprofit sponsored entity had submitted a redevelopment proposal. The study concluded that if a minimum of \$23.4 million of funding was available, it would cover baseline restoration costs; however, no specific funding sources, capital investments, or ongoing operating and maintenance costs were identified or available. The study also noted that restoration costs would increase depending on the use of the property. Following the Commerce study, the seminary at Saint Edward State Park was historically restored by a private developer and began operating as The Lodge at St. Edward Park in 2021.

Summary of Bill:

The limitations on the State Parks and Recreation Commission's lease terms and conditions for Saint Edward State Park are removed.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 19, 2024.

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