

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2594

*As Reported By House Committee on:
Natural Resources & Parks*

Title: An act relating to the establishment of an account for the operation and maintenance of state-owned fish and wildlife habitat, natural areas such as natural area preserves and natural resource conservation areas, parks, and other recreation lands.

Brief Description: Applying the state wildlife and recreation lands management act.

Sponsor(s): Representatives Fraser, Beck, Belcher, Brumsickle, Basich, Wynne and J. Kohl; by request of Interagency for Outdoor Recreation.

Brief History:

Reported by House Committee on:
Natural Resources & Parks, February 6, 1992, DPS.

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
NATURAL RESOURCES & PARKS**

Majority Report: *The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass.* Signed by 11 members: Representatives Belcher, Chair; Scott, Vice Chair; Beck, Ranking Minority Member; Brumsickle, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Dellwo; Fraser; Hargrove; Morton; Riley; Sheldon; and Wynne.

Staff: Randy Acker (786-7129).

Background: The state of Washington owns significant acreage of fish and wildlife habitat, natural areas, parks and other recreation lands. Over the past decade, as the state's population has grown, the demands on these lands have increased dramatically.

The state's natural resources agencies are responsible for management and maintenance of these lands and associated facilities, not only to provide for current use, but to preserve the values associated with the lands that caused their acquisition initially. Historically, these agencies have received limited funding for operations and maintenance needs and have often deferred routine maintenance in order to operate within the limits of funding. Deferred

maintenance can change a routine project into one requiring major work and significant capital expenditures.

The 1990 Legislature directed the Interagency Committee for Outdoor Recreation (IAC) to assess the operation and maintenance needs of state-owned habitat and natural areas, parks, and other state-owned recreational sites. In its report, the IAC found that there are significant shortfalls in operation and maintenance funding. A one-time catch-up expenditure of \$39.5 million is required to repair facilities and roads, and to replace equipment which has exceeded its planned life cycle. It also found there is a need to increase annual operation and maintenance funding by \$10.9 million to prevent future backlogs from occurring, and to properly care for new lands acquired during the 1989-91 biennium.

Summary of Substitute Bill: It is the policy of the state of Washington to provide adequate and continuing funding for operation and maintenance needs of state-owned fish and wildlife habitat, natural areas, parks, and other recreation lands in order to protect the state's investment in such lands.

The state wildlife and recreation lands management account is established and is to be used exclusively for operation and maintenance needs associated with managing state-owned habitat, natural areas, and recreation lands. Legislative appropriation is required for expenditure from this account.

Monies appropriated from the account must be used for the following purposes and distributed according to the following percentages:

- Basic stewardship - not less than 30 percent;
- Improved or Developed Resources - not less than 20 percent;
- Human Use Management - not less than 15 percent; and,
- Administration - not more than 15 percent.

The individual agencies eligible for funding from this account are not required to meet this distribution; however, funding across agencies should meet these percentages during each biennium.

The agencies eligible to receive funds from the account include the departments of Fisheries, Wildlife, and Natural Resources, and the State Parks and Recreation Commission. Monies appropriated from the account must be distributed to these agencies in the following manner:

Parks and Recreation Commission - not less than 25 percent;
Department of Natural Resources - not less than 25 percent;
Department of Wildlife - not less than 25 percent; and,
Department of Fisheries - no minimum specified.

A State Wildlife and Recreation Lands Management Task Force is created to develop recommendations regarding new long-term funding sources for the act. The task force must investigate opportunities for the use of future appropriations for habitat conservation and recreation in meeting major operations and maintenance funding needs. In addition, the task force must report on funding needed to assist counties with local service provided to protect state-owned lands. The task force is composed of seven voting members, appointed by the governor, plus five non-voting members representing the departments of Fisheries, Wildlife, Natural Resources, the Parks and Recreation Commission, and the Office of Financial Management. The Interagency Committee for Outdoor Recreation (IAC) and Office of Financial Management (OFM) are directed to provide staff and technical assistance to the task force. A report and recommendations must be submitted to the governor and committees of the Legislature by September 15, 1992.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The task force is directed to investigate opportunities for the use of future appropriations for habitat conservation and recreation in meeting major operations and maintenance funding needs. The task force must also report on funding needed to assist counties with local service provided to protect state-owned lands. In addition to IAC, OFM is directed to provide staff to the task force.

Fiscal Note: Requested January 22, 1992.

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

Testimony For: There is a tremendous need to establish a dedicated fund to pay for operations and maintenance costs on state-owned habitat and recreation lands. As the population has grown, especially over the past decade, the demands on these lands have increased dramatically. Funding for operations and maintenance is so limited that most state agencies have only very limited, or no, maintenance programs. Agencies are forced to fix things only when they are broken. The result is that most facilities and lands are maintained at only a fraction of the level needed.

Testimony Against: None.

Witnesses: Joe LaTourette, Washington Wildlife and Recreation Coalition (in favor); Larry Fairleigh, Interagency Committee for Outdoor Recreation (in favor); Jenene Fenton, Department of Wildlife (in favor); Arden Olson, Department of Natural Resources (in favor); Nina Carter, State Parks and Recreation Commission (in favor); and Maggie Coon, The Nature Conservancy (in favor).