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SENATE BILL 6510

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State of Washington

53rd Legislature

1994 Regular Session

By Senators Owen, Oke and Haugen

Read first time 01/25/94. Referred to Committee on Natural Resources.

1 AN ACT Relating to wildlife and fisheries habitat on state  
2 rangelands; adding a new section to chapter 89.08 RCW; adding a new  
3 section to chapter 79.01 RCW; adding a new section to chapter 77.12  
4 RCW; adding a new section to chapter 43.51 RCW; creating new sections;  
5 and making an appropriation.

6 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

7 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature finds that the restoration  
8 and maintenance of Washington's rangelands and shrub steppe habitat is  
9 vital to the long-term benefit of the people of the state, and that the  
10 state lacks a consistent policy toward management of state rangelands  
11 and wildlife, fish, and water quality protection on these lands.  
12 Livestock and wildlife are the primary users of rangelands and are  
13 important resources in Washington's economy. Livestock grazing is  
14 managed inconsistently by the state agencies that lease rangelands for  
15 this purpose. The inconsistencies exist in grazing fee structure,  
16 management philosophy, management intensity, and stewardship of other  
17 public resources such as water, vegetation, wildlife, and fisheries.  
18 The legislature finds that the state agencies do not charge private  
19 landowners sufficient fees for grazing leases to cover the full cost of

1 administering the leases, conducting capital improvements, and avoiding  
2 or mitigating damages to public resources. The legislature declares  
3 that wildlife, fish, and water quality protection, rangeland  
4 preservation and sustainability, proper grazing management, and  
5 adequate lease fees must be implemented consistently on state lands,  
6 and that a state policy be developed to accomplish these goals.

7 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 89.08 RCW  
8 to read as follows:

9 The public grazing policy committee is established. The committee  
10 shall consist of eleven members. Eight members shall be appointed by  
11 the chair of the Washington conservation commission, who shall also  
12 function as the chair of the committee. The appointees shall represent  
13 the following agencies and interests:

- 14 (1) Washington State University cooperative extension service;
- 15 (2) Department of fish and wildlife;
- 16 (3) Department of natural resources;
- 17 (4) Washington rangelands committee;
- 18 (5) Department of ecology;
- 19 (6) Livestock growers' organization;
- 20 (7) Environmental group; and
- 21 (8) Outdoor recreation interest.

22 The chair of the fisheries and wildlife committee of the house of  
23 representatives and the senate committee on natural resources shall  
24 also serve on the public grazing policy committee.

25 Members of the committee shall receive no additional compensation  
26 for their services except that travel expenses shall be allowed in  
27 accordance with RCW 43.03.050 and 43.03.060.

28 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** The public grazing policy committee  
29 established in section 2 of this act shall develop recommendations and  
30 a rationale for each to the appropriate committees of the legislature  
31 on the following policy issues by December 31, 1994:

- 32 (1) How to control livestock in open range counties from  
33 interfering with state management objectives or coordinated objectives  
34 developed through the coordinated resource management planning process;
- 35 (2) The capital investments needed on state rangelands to maximize  
36 long-term range productivity and long-term preservation of fish and  
37 wildlife habitat and water quality;

1 (3) An appropriate level of state agency funding for management of  
2 and research on state rangelands;

3 (4) An appropriate level of state agency staffing for adequate  
4 implementation of coordinated resource management planning;

5 (5) Whether grazing leases issued by the state should continue to  
6 be categorically exempted from the environmental review process under  
7 the state environmental policy act; and

8 (6) How to best coordinate and integrate state, federal, tribal,  
9 and agency public rangelands ecosystems management and policies.

10 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** A new section is added to chapter 79.01 RCW  
11 to read as follows:

12 The department shall implement a range inventory and monitoring  
13 program for application to all department-managed rangelands. The  
14 inventory shall be designed to produce reliable estimates of forage  
15 production, livestock carrying capacity, and residue remaining after  
16 grazing. The program shall use this information to adjust the number  
17 of animal unit months, grazing system, and timing to maintain or  
18 improve range condition.

19 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 5.** A new section is added to chapter 77.12 RCW  
20 to read as follows:

21 The department shall implement a range inventory and monitoring  
22 program for application to all department-managed rangelands. The  
23 inventory shall be designed to produce reliable estimates of forage  
24 production, livestock carrying capacity, and residue remaining after  
25 grazing. The program shall use this information to adjust the number  
26 of animal unit months, grazing system, and timing to maintain or  
27 improve range condition.

28 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 6.** A new section is added to chapter 43.51 RCW  
29 to read as follows:

30 The commission shall implement a range inventory and monitoring  
31 program for application to all commission-managed rangelands. The  
32 inventory shall be designed to produce reliable estimates of forage  
33 production, livestock carrying capacity, and residue remaining after  
34 grazing. The program shall use this information to adjust the number  
35 of animal unit months, grazing system, and timing to maintain or  
36 improve range condition.

1        NEW SECTION.    **Sec. 7.** By October 31, 1994, the legislative budget  
2 committee shall report to the appropriate legislative committees on the  
3 livestock grazing programs in the state departments of fish and  
4 wildlife and natural resources, and the state parks and recreation  
5 commission. The report shall address the following:

6        (1) Costs and benefits of the programs, including indirect costs  
7 and benefits to public resources such as fish, wildlife, and water;

8        (2) Adequacy of date and other information used by each agency to  
9 develop lease specifications such as the number of animal unit months  
10 and timing of grazing;

11       (3) Whether such agency adequately determines the impact of  
12 livestock grazing to public resources such as water, wildlife,  
13 vegetation, and fisheries;

14       (4) Whether public resource protection standards are conditions of  
15 grazing leases;

16       (5) Whether conditions are complied with by the lessee and  
17 frequency of compliance; and

18       (6) Whether lessees are monitored for compliance.

19       NEW SECTION.    **Sec. 8.** The sum of ten thousand dollars, or as much  
20 thereof as may be necessary, is appropriated for the biennium ending  
21 June 30, 1995, from the general fund to the state conservation  
22 commission for the purposes of administering the project set out in  
23 this act.

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