

FINAL BILL REPORT

SHB 2321

C 199 L 04

Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Clarifying the definitions of certain natural resources terms.

Sponsors: By House Committee on Agriculture & Natural Resources (originally sponsored by Representatives Linville, Schoesler, Sump, Grant and Pearson; by request of Commissioner of Public Lands).

House Committee on Agriculture & Natural Resources
Senate Committee on Natural Resources, Energy & Water

Background:

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) manages more than five million acres of state-owned land, which is more than any other state or local entity in Washington. Management authority and direction for the DNR is located in various sections of the Public Lands Act. The scope and effect of those statutory directions depend on the term used to describe state land. The terms "state lands," "public lands," "state forest lands," and "aquatic lands" are among the terms that may be used to describe state-owned land, and they all have different meanings.

The term "public lands" is described as any lands owned by Washington, and includes state trust lands that are not reserved for a specific use, aquatic lands, and those lands falling under the definition of "state lands." The term "state lands" includes lands held in trust for common schools or universities, capitol building lands, institutional lands, and all public lands except for aquatic lands. Not included in either definition are state forest lands and some lands held for a specific purpose, such as natural area preserves, land bank lands, and natural resource conservation areas.

Fixtures attached to "state lands" that change the value of the land are defined as "improvements." This definition only applies to those lands falling under the definition of "state lands" and does not include fixtures on other public lands.

Summary:

Definitions

Certain definitions in the Public Lands Act are modified. The definition of "public lands" is expanded to include all lands administered by the DNR. This definition includes aquatic lands, state forest lands, and state lands. By not excluding any lands held for a specific purpose, this definition also encompasses holdings such as natural area preserves, land bank lands, and natural resource conservation areas. The definition of "state lands" is expanded to

include land banks and escheat donations. The definition of "improvements" is expanded to cover all DNR-administered lands, and not just "state lands."

Changing "state lands" to "public lands"

The term "state lands" is changed to "public lands" in multiple sections, resulting in a broadening of the effect of the changed sections. This includes:

- expanding the authority to recall a lease, contract, or deed to correct errors to all public lands, and not just state lands;
- expanding the requirement to void certain legal transactions to all public lands, and not just state lands;
- expanding the optional requirement that the DNR may comply with local zoning ordinances to all public lands, and not just state lands;
- expanding the authority of the DNR to set rules or procedures governing the sale of valuable materials to aquatic lands and other public lands, and not just state lands and state forest lands; and
- expanding the authority of the DNR to grant easement rights to aquatic lands and other public lands, and not just state lands and state forest lands.

Votes on Final Passage:

House 96 0
Senate 48 0 (Senate amended)
House 97 0 (House concurred)

Effective: June 10, 2004