
**Fisheries, Ecology & Parks
Committee**

SB 6234

Brief Description: Concerning nonhighway and off-road vehicles.

Sponsors: Senators Oke, Fraser, Swecker, Parlette, Fairley, Jacobsen, Esser, Brown and Kline.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Revises Nonhighway and Off-road Vehicle Activities Program (NOVA) account allocations for the Interagency Committee for Outdoor Recreation (IAC) and the Department of Natural Resources.
- Establishes nonhighway road recreation facilities as a new IAC grant category, along with nonmotorized and off-road vehicles facilities, and requires that an equal amount of funds be expended on each category.

Hearing Date: 2/24/04

Staff: Jeff Olsen (786-7157).

Background:

Fuel tax paid on gasoline consumed for recreational purposes on nonhighway roads is used to support nonhighway and off-road vehicle (ORV) recreational facilities. The treasurer deposits 1 percent of the eligible fuel tax revenue into the Nonhighway and Off-road Vehicle Activities (NOVA) account. Funds from the NOVA account are distributed by statutory formula including:

- 40 percent is deposited in the ORV account for the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to maintain and manage ORV and nonhighway road recreational facilities. 10 percent of these funds are transferred to the Interagency Committee for Outdoor Recreation (IAC) for education and enforcement;
- 3.5 percent is deposited in the ORV account and administered by the Department of Fish and Wildlife for acquisition, planning, development, maintenance and management of nonhighway roads and recreation facilities;
- 2 percent is deposited in the ORV account and administered by the State Parks and Recreation Commission for the maintenance and management of ORV facilities; and

- 54.5 percent is deposited in the NOVA account and administered by the IAC for the planning, maintenance and management of ORV and nonhighway road recreational facilities, as well as ORV education and law enforcement programs.

The NOVA Advisory Committee is appointed by the IAC and provides advice regarding the administration of the NOVA program, including the evaluation of NOVA projects submitted for funding. Funds distributed to the IAC for the NOVA grant program are subject to the following spending restrictions:

- up to 20 percent for ORV education and law enforcement;
- up to 60 percent for ORV recreation facilities; and
- up to 20 percent for nonhighway road recreation facilities.

Applicants for land acquisition projects must conduct public hearings and publish notices before submitting their project to the IAC.

A fuel use study was completed in 2003 to determine the relative portion of motor fuel tax revenues attributable to off-road vehicle and nonhighway road recreational activities. Legislation passed in the 2003 session directed an advisory committee of stakeholders to review the existing allocation formulas and develop recommendations consistent with the fuel use study.

Summary of Bill:

The allocation of NOVA funds to the DNR is decreased from 40 percent to 36 percent, and the transfer of funds from the DNR to the IAC for enforcement and education is eliminated. Categorical restrictions on the use of DNR's NOVA funds are eliminated.

The IAC distribution is increased from 54.5 percent to 58.5 percent. The restriction on education and enforcement funding is increased from 20 percent to 30 percent. Of the remaining funds, not less than 30 percent may be spent in each of three categories including ORV recreation facilities, nonmotorized recreation facilities, and nonhighway road recreation facilities. The minimum percentage may be waived if there are insufficient requests for funds or low scoring projects.

Three types of nonhighway recreational users are defined. ORV recreational users include anyone using motorized recreational vehicles including motorcycles, all-terrain vehicles, or four-wheel drive vehicles. Nonmotorized recreational users include hikers, skiers, mountain bikers, horseback riders or others that use nonmotorized trails and facilities. Nonhighway road recreational users include persons using nonhighway roads for recreational purposes such as hunting, fishing, wildlife viewing, camping, or sightseeing. Technical changes are made to several definitions including alphabetizing the entire definitions section.

The NOVA funds may be used by each agency for nonmotorized, ORV, or nonhighway road recreation facilities. At least annually the agencies must report to the Nonhighway and Off-road Vehicle Advisory committee on the expenditure of funds, and seek the advisory committee's advice on proposed expenditures. The Nonhighway and Off-road Vehicle Advisory committee is expanded to include governmental representatives and land managers.

Public hearing and notice requirements are removed for land acquisition and development projects, however, projects must comply with either the State Environmental Policy Act or the National Environmental Policy Act.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed, except for Section 4 , which takes effect July 1, 2004, and Sections 5 and 6, which take effect June 30, 2005.