

6486

Sponsor(s): Senators Morton, Rasmussen, Honeyford, Swecker and Mulliken

Brief Description: Concerning water rights for agricultural uses.

SB 6486 - DIGEST

Declares that any withdrawal of water for stock watering purposes begun before the effective date of this act that is not otherwise embodied in a water right permit, certificate, or claim shall be deemed a water right in good standing and shall receive an agricultural water permit under chapter 90.44 RCW if: (1) The use of water exceeding five thousand gallons per day as a daily average over the period of a year is filed by the water user with the department by July 1, 2006, and the filing is accompanied by proof of beneficial water use based on meter records, livestock numbers, or other appropriate means of demonstrating water use at the time of filing;

(2) The water used under a filing made under this act does not exceed the quantity or rate listed in a permit granted under the provisions of this act; and

(3) The water use remains as an agricultural use.

Provides that the department may acquire, lease, or otherwise obtain water for stock watering purposes in watersheds when: (1) Local economics and the cost of water do not allow agricultural interests to compete with other interests for the purchase or lease of water rights; or

(2) The further diversion or withdrawal of water for stock watering purposes cannot be accomplished without significant instream flow impacts.

Requires acquisitions made under this act to be made such that the acquisition will provide for stock watering purposes and help meet instream flow needs.

Provides that acquisitions may only be made under the provisions of this act with funds from the stock water account created in section 4 of this act.

Requires a water right acquired by the department under this act to be held in the state trust water rights program under chapter 90.42 RCW until the water right is leased for stock watering purposes.

Authorizes the department to lease or sell water rights acquired under section 5 of this act to users who may put the water to beneficial use for stock watering purposes on a first-come, first-served basis.

Provides that revenue derived from the lease of waters under this act must be placed in the stock water account created in section 4 of this act.

Directs the department to seek federal and local funds to augment state funding for the account.