

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SHB 1295

As Passed House:

February 5, 2007

Title: An act relating to water resource inventory area 14.

Brief Description: Dividing water resource inventory area 14 into WRIA 14a and WRIA 14b.

Sponsors: By House Committee on Select Committee on Puget Sound (originally sponsored by Representatives Eickmeyer and Upthegrove).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Select Committee on Puget Sound: 1/24/07 [DPS].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/5/07, 95-0.

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Divides Water Resource Inventory Area 14 into two segments distinguished by whether the water drains into Hood Canal.
- Applies the same proportional ratio used to fund the two segments of Water Resource Inventory Area 14 to all other water resource inventory areas that have been created through the division of a water resource inventory area.

HOUSE SELECT COMMITTEE ON PUGET SOUND

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 8 members: Representatives Upthegrove, Chair; Eickmeyer, Vice Chair; Rolfes, Vice Chair; Sump, Ranking Minority Member; Walsh, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; O'Brien, Pearson and Springer.

Staff: Jason Callahan (786-7117).

Background:

Watershed Planning

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

The Watershed Planning Act establishes a process through which local groups can develop and implement plans for managing and protecting local water resources and rights. The local groups authorized to develop watershed plans are organized by water resource inventory areas (WRIAs). A WRIA is, generally speaking, an area determined to be a distinct watershed.

There are 62 WRIAs identified by the Department of Ecology (Department). Each WRIA is identified by a number and may contain a local watershed planning group with an identified lead entity. The WRIA 40, which is located in central Washington, is unique in that the Legislature specially bifurcated the watershed into two distinct WRIAs and authorized separate planning processes.

Once constituted, a WRIA is eligible for grant funding from the Department. There are funding opportunities available for both planning and implementation. Between WRIA 40a and 40b, the assigned funding is split so that one WRIA receives 25 percent of the available funding and the other WRIA receives 75 percent of the available funding.

The 63 WRIAs eligible to participate in the planning process are not in the same stage of development. Some WRIAs are implementing their plans, while others have yet to have a local watershed group form. In between, there are WRIAs that have an approved plan awaiting implementation, WRIAs still developing the local plan, WRIAs where the planning process has been terminated, and WRIAs with developed plans awaiting county approval.

WRIA 14

The WRIA 14 is the Kennedy-Goldsborough watershed and is located in Mason and Thurston counties. The WRIA surrounds the city of Shelton, and drains into both the Hood Canal and the furthest extremes of southern Puget Sound. The lead agency for the WRIA 14 watershed group is the Mason County Department of Community Development, and the initiating governments are Mason County, a local public utility district, the City of Shelton, Thurston County, and the Squaxin Island Indian Tribe.

The local watershed group completed a draft plan in 2006; however, the unanimous consensus of the initiating governments was not reached and the planning process was terminated. Prior to the termination, the WRIA 14 group had received \$770,000 in grants from the Department.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

The WRIA 14 is divided into two separate areas. Those portions of WRIA 14 draining into the Hood Canal are designated as WRIA 14b, and other portions of WRIA 14 are designated WRIA 14a. Planning responsibilities for WRIA 14b is transferred to the WRIA 16 planning unit, which is located just to the north of WRIA 14 in the Skokomish-Dosewallips watershed.

Both WRIA 14a and 14b are scheduled to receive one half of the planning money reserved for a single WRIA. The 50:50 fund sharing ratio that applies to WRIA 14a and 14b also applies to implementation funding for all other WRIAs that have been created through the division of a distinct WRIA.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) The land that makes up the current WRIA 14 has a distinct plateau that divides separate drainages. One drainage flows into Hood Canal, while the other is destined for the Puget Sound. The part of WRIA 14 that drains into Hood Canal is part of the Hood Canal Aquatic Rehabilitation Zone, and has different needs and requirements. The two distinct segments of WRIA 14 should not be addressed in the same planning process. Making WRIA 14 into two distinct WRIsAs will address jurisdictional housekeeping that was identified at the local level as a part of the watershed planning process. Aquatic life does not recognize governmental distinctions, and this change to WRIA 14 allows a healthy and collaborative planning process to continue.

The WRIA 16 planning group has long been involved with WRIA 14 planning due to the fact that both WRIsAs share the Hood Canal. Once the division is made, the WRIA 16 planning group can get to work planning for the entire Hood Canal drainage. The first step will be the development of an adaptive management tool for the public's consumption.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative William Eickmeyer, prime sponsor; Constance Ibsen, Lower Hood Canal Watershed Coalition; and Keith Dublanica, Skokomish Indian Tribe.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.