
Judiciary Committee

HB 1561

Title: An act relating to the authority of a watershed management partnership to exercise powers of its forming governments.

Brief Description: Granting authority of a watershed management partnership to exercise powers of its forming governments.

Sponsors: Representatives Jarrett, Clibborn, Goodman, Springer, Eddy, Rodne and P. Sullivan.

| Brief Summary of Bill |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">Provides that a separate legal entity created by a watershed management partnership may exercise the power of eminent domain jointly with the partnership if all the public agencies comprising the partnership have the power of eminent domain. |

Hearing Date: 2/2/07

Staff: Bill Perry (786-7123).

Background:

Watershed Management Plans

State law establishes a mechanism for conducting watershed planning through a locally initiated process. The state law process requires watershed planning to include an assessment of water supply and use in the planning area. It also requires development of strategies for future water use. Watershed planning may include elements such as water quality, habitat, and instream flow.

Watershed planning may be conducted for one watershed or for one or more water resource inventory areas (WRIAs). WRIAs are water resource areas designated by the Department of Ecology as of January 1, 1997. Local governments initiate watershed planning by creating a planning unit and designating a lead agency to provide staff support. The Department of Ecology provides grants for organizing a planning unit, establishing work schedules, conducting assessments, studying storage opportunities, setting instream flows, developing a watershed plan, and making recommendations.

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.

When a watershed plan is approved by a planning unit, it is submitted for approval by the legislative authorities of all counties with territory in any WRIA for which planning was conducted. To take effect, the plan must be approved by the counties after notice, public hearings, and a joint session to consider the plan.

Watershed Management Partnerships

Public agencies may enter into interlocal agreements to form a watershed management partnership to implement all or parts of a watershed management plan, including coordination and oversight of plan implementation. Watershed plans, salmon recovery plans, watershed management elements of comprehensive plans and shoreline master programs, and other types of plans are considered "watershed management plans" for these purposes.

A watershed management partnership may create a "separate legal entity" to conduct the cooperative undertaking of the partnership. Such a separate legal entity may contract indebtedness and may issue general obligation bonds.

Interlocal Agreement Act

The Interlocal Cooperation Act allows public agencies to enter into agreements with one another for joint or cooperative action. Any power, privilege, or authority held by a public agency may be exercised jointly with one or more other public agencies having the same power, privilege, or authority.

A "public agency" for purposes of interlocal agreements includes any agency, political subdivision, or unit of local government. The term specifically includes municipal corporations, special purpose districts, local service districts, state agencies, federal agencies, recognized Indian tribes, and other states' political subdivisions.

Power of Eminent Domain

Many different public and private entities have been granted the power of eminent domain. Under the interlocal agreement act, if two or more entities with the power of eminent domain join to form a watershed management partnership, then the partnership itself will have the power of eminent domain as well. However, in such a case, the power of eminent domain may not extend to the "separate legal entity" created by a watershed management. Such a separate legal entity may not be a "public agency" within the meaning of the interlocal agreement act.

Summary of Bill:

A watershed management partnership and a separate legal entity created by it to conduct the operation of the partnership may exercise the power of eminent domain if all of the public agencies that form the partnership do themselves have the power of eminent domain.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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