

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6204

As Passed Senate, February 18, 2008

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: Senator Sheldon.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Water, Energy & Telecommunications: 1/16/08 [DP].

Passed Senate: 2/18/08, 43-0.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WATER, ENERGY & TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Rockefeller, Chair; Murray, Vice Chair; Honeyford, Ranking Minority Member; Delvin, Hatfield, Holmquist, Morton and Regala.

Staff: Karen Epps (786-7424)

Background: The Watershed Planning Act establishes a process for local groups to develop and implement plans to manage and protect local water resources and rights. The local groups authorized to develop watershed plans are organized by water resource inventory areas (WRIA). A WRIA is an area determined to be a distinct watershed or river basin.

The Department of Ecology (Ecology) identifies 62 WRIsAs. Each WRIA is identified by a number and may contain a local watershed planning group with an identified lead entity. Once constituted, a WRIA is eligible for grant funding from Ecology. Watershed planning is conducted in four phases: (1) initiation and organization of a planning unit (\$50,000 for single WRIA planning units, and up to \$75,000 in multi-WRIA units); (2) water quantity assessment and future use strategy (up to \$200,000); (3) development of a watershed plan and recommendations for action (up to \$250,000); and (4) implementation of the plan (up to \$100,000 for each of the first three years and an additional two-year extension of up to \$50,000 for each year of the extension – for a total phase four funding potential of \$400,000).

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. The initiating governments are Mason County, Mason County Public Utilities District No. 1, the City of Shelton, Thurston County, and the Squaxin Island Indian Tribe.

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 local watershed group completed a draft plan in 2006. However, the initiating governments did not reach unanimous consensus and the planning process terminated. Prior to the termination, the WRIA 14 group had received \$770,000 in grants from Ecology.

Summary of 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 are 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.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: It makes sense to divide WRIA 14 so that WRIA 16 can look at all of Hood Canal. 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 plan for the entire Hood Canal drainage. This split is necessary for funding purposes. However, this split will only affect watershed planning. WRIA 14 will remain intact for all other purposes.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Tim Sheldon, prime sponsor; Constance Ibsen, member of WRIA 16; Jack Turner, Tom Clingman, Ecology.