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**HOUSE BILL 1654**

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**State of Washington 64th Legislature 2015 Regular Session**

**By** Representatives Peterson, Lytton, Fitzgibbon, Blake, and Walkinshaw

AN ACT Relating to controlling noxious weeds while still supporting pollen-rich forage plant communities for honey bees; amending RCW 17.10.145; adding a new section to chapter 43.220 RCW; creating a new section; and providing an expiration date.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1) The state noxious weed control board shall conduct a pilot project that evaluates the advantages of purposefully replacing pollen-rich noxious weeds, such as knapweed and thistle, which are productive forage plants for honey bees, with native forage plants that can produce similar levels of pollen to support honey bee populations. The pilot project must be developed to maximize the dual public benefits of reducing noxious weeds in Washington and maintaining access to pollen-rich plants for honey bees and apiarists.

(2) In implementing the pilot project, the state noxious weed control board must coordinate with willing landowners and provide plant starts, seed packs, and other goods or services necessary to replace noxious weeds with native plants. Priority must be given to private landowners located in areas where the dual benefits can be maximized. However, public landowners or managers may also be considered for participation.

(3) The implementation details of the pilot project required by this section are at the sole discretion of the state noxious weed control board, including the selection of pilot project partners and participants.

(4) The state noxious weed control board must issue a report to the legislature, consistent with RCW 43.01.036, that outlines the successes and challenges of the pilot project. This report must be presented by October 31, 2017, and include:

(a) Assessments of the acceptance level by landowners and the apiary industry;

(b) An analysis of the costs and benefits of using plant replacement as a strategy for satisfying the two public benefits of the pilot project;

(c) Recommendations for incentives for landowners to choose bee-friendly plant replacement over simple weed elimination; and

(d) Any recommendations for extending the pilot project or using the lessons learned as part of Washington's overall noxious weed control strategy.

(5) This section expires June 30, 2018.

**Sec.**  RCW 17.10.145 and 1997 c 353 s 18 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) All state agencies shall control noxious weeds on lands they own, lease, or otherwise control through integrated pest management practices. Agencies shall develop plans in cooperation with county noxious weed control boards to control noxious weeds in accordance with standards in this chapter.

(2) All state agencies' lands must comply with this chapter, regardless of noxious weed control efforts on adjacent lands.

(3) As part of compliance with this chapter, all agencies must, when practicable, implement a long-term noxious weed control plan that includes replacing pollen-rich or nectar-rich noxious weeds with native forage plants that are beneficial for pollinators such as honey bees.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 43.220 RCW to read as follows:

Any corps project that involves the removal of noxious weeds must, when deemed practicable by the project sponsor, give preference to replacing pollen-rich or nectar-rich noxious weeds with native forage plants that are beneficial for pollinators such as honey bees.

**--- END ---**