
Environment Committee

HB 1715

Brief Description: Protecting Puget Sound through funding and implementing local on-site sewage program management plans.

Sponsors: Representatives Peterson, Fitzgibbon and S. Hunt; by request of Department of Health.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Establishes a mandatory fee of at least \$30 per year for on-site sewage systems located in Puget Sound counties.
- Directs fees to local health boards to implement on-site sewage management plans.
- Enables counties to establish a loan program with the Department of Health and Department of Ecology to assist homeowners in on-site sewage systems maintenance and repairs.

Hearing Date: 2/12/15

Staff: Daniel Rusk (786-7290), Jacob Lipson (786-7196).

Background:

Twelve counties in Washington are located within the Puget Sound basin. Within the basin, there are an estimated 600,000 on-site sewage systems (OSS). Local health jurisdictions administer regulations regarding OSS.

In 2005 the Department of Health (Department) reset standards and expectations regarding the management and care of OSS. These standards require an owner of an OSS to maintain the OSS and complete a full system evaluation every three years. In general, the owner bears the costs associated with repair and upkeep of the OSS.

Beginning in July 2007, local health boards in the 12 counties bordering the Puget Sound basin were required to develop an OSS management plan. The management plans are intended to help

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owners of OSS evaluate and maintain their systems. When developing the management plans, the local health board must propose marine recovery areas where OSS are a significant contributing factor to concerns associated with: shellfish growing; marine waters with low dissolved oxygen or fecal coliform; and waters where nitrogen is a contaminant. These local management plans must include information on how the local health jurisdiction will, among other things:

- maintain an inventory of all the OSS within the local health jurisdiction;
- identify areas where the OSS may pose an increased risk to public health;
- identify requirements for the OSS to address areas of increased risk; and
- help and encourage homeowners to inspect and maintain their OSS.

By July 1, 2007, each county was required to have its OSS management plan approved by the Department. The local health board in the counties bordering the Puget Sound may collect reasonable rates from OSS owners to help administer a management plan.

Funding Sources.

Washington State Water Pollution Control Revolving Fund and the Centennial Clean Water Fund are loan programs funded by State and Federal money that may be used for a variety of programs related to water quality.

Summary of Bill:

The local health board in the 12 counties bordering the Puget Sound must impose an annual fee of at least \$30 on owners of an OSS located within the Puget Sound basin. The fee may be imposed on areas of the counties located outside the basin. However, certain elderly people and disabled veterans that are exempt from paying property taxes are exempt from paying this fee. The local health board must use the fee for implementing an OSS management plan. This fee may not be used to finance OSS management plan services financed by another funding source. However, any existing fee that covers substantially the same service must be adjusted to account for this new fee.

The Department must review and approve local health boards' on-site sewage management plans to ensure that they meet specific standards to be set by the Department by rule. Once approved, or after 60 days without notification from the Department, the local health board must implement the management plan. The local health board must update these plans at least once every five years.

Additionally, the Department and counties may coordinate with the Department of Ecology to establish a low interest loan program to help owners repair and replace their OSS.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Preliminary fiscal note available.

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