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## Environment & Energy Committee

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### HJR 4210

**Brief Description:** Adding a new section to the Washington state Constitution regarding the conservation and protection of the state's natural resources.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Lekanoff, Pollet and Ramel.

#### Brief Summary of Bill

- Amends the state Constitution to provide that the people of the state have the right to a clean and healthy environment, that the state shall serve as a trustee of its natural resources and climate, and that the state shall equitably protect these rights for all people.

**Hearing Date:** 1/29/24

**Staff:** Zachary Blinkinsop (786-7296) and Robert Hatfield (786-7117).

#### **Background:**

##### Amending the State Constitution.

The State Constitution provides a method for the adoption of amendments. To amend the Constitution, a joint resolution must be passed by a two-thirds majority of both houses of the Legislature. To be enacted, the proposed amendment must be placed on the general election ballot and must be approved by a simple majority of the voters.

The Constitution provides requirements for two methods of publicity for proposed constitutional amendments. The first is a requirement that the Secretary of State send a copy of the proposed amendment, with arguments for and against the proposal, to every residence in the state. The second is a requirement that notice of the proposed amendment be published in every legal

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newspaper in the state at least four times during the four weeks preceding the election.

**Summary of Bill:**

A constitutional amendment is placed on the ballot of the next general election asking voters to approve or reject a new section to Article I of the Constitution of the State of Washington providing that the people of the state, including future generations, have the right to a clean and healthy environment, including pure water, clean air, healthy ecosystems, and a stable climate, and to the preservation of the natural, cultural, scenic, and healthful qualities of the environment.

The amendment would further provide that the state, including each branch, agency, and political subdivision, must serve as a trustee of the natural resources of the state, including its waters, air, flora, fauna, soils, and climate. The state, including its political subdivisions, shall conserve, protect, and maintain these resources for the benefit of all the people, including generations yet to come.

Finally, the amendment would provide that the rights established by the amendment are inherent, inalienable, and indefeasible, are among those rights reserved to all people, and are on par with other protected inalienable rights. The state must equitably protect these rights for all people regardless of their race, ethnicity geography, or wealth, and shall act with prudence, loyalty, impartiality, and equitable treatment of all beneficiaries in fulfilling its trustee obligations.

The Secretary of State must publish notice of the amendment at least four times during the four weeks preceding the election in every legal newspaper in the state.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.