SENATE BILL REPORT
EHB 1609

As Passed Senate, April 11, 2025

Title: An act relating to efficient administration of state education agencies.

Brief Description: Promoting efficient administration of state education agencies.

Sponsors: Representatives Waters, Mena, Reed and Nance; by request of Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Brief History: Passed House: 3/11/25, 78-17.
Committee Activity: Agriculture & Natural Resources: 3/20/25, 3/24/25 [DP].
Floor Activity: Passed Senate: 4/11/25, 49-0.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Allows the superintendent of public instruction to use a designee on the Board of Natural Resources.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES

Majority Report: Do pass.
Signed by Senators Chapman, Chair; Krishnadasan, Vice Chair; Short, Ranking Member; Liias, Muzzall, Saldaña, Schoesler, Shewmake and Wagoner.

Staff: Jeff Olsen (786-7428)

Background: Board of Natural Resources. Upon statehood, the federal government granted certain lands to the state to be held in trust for several specified purposes. Beneficiaries of these trust lands include common schools, public higher education institutions, the capitol buildings and grounds, and charitable, educational, penal, and reform institutions. These lands are overseen by the Board of Natural Resources and administered by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

The Board of Natural Resources sets policies to guide how DNR manages the state's lands and resources. The Board of Natural Resources has several responsibilities: (1) approve or disapprove trust land timber and mineral sales, (2) establish the sustainable harvest level for forested trust lands, (3) approve or disapprove sales or exchanges of trust lands, and (4) guide DNR's stewardship of state natural area preserves, natural resources conservation areas, and aquatic or submerged lands.

The Board of Natural Resources is composed of six members:

- the Governor or a designee;
- the superintendent of public instruction;
- the commissioner of public lands;
- the director of the University of Washington School of Forest Resources;
- the dean of the Washington State University College of Agricultural, Human, and Natural Resource Sciences; and
- a county representative.

Superintendent of Public Instruction. The superintendent of public instruction is a statewide-elected official and the chief state school officer in Washington. The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction is the primary agency charged with overseeing public K-12 education in Washington.

Summary of Bill: The superintendent of public instruction may use a designee from the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction on the Board of Natural Resources.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: Some counties in southwest Washington rely heavily on timber to help support funding for schools. There should be someone from OSPI that has a timber background to serve on the Board of Natural Resources. If a board member is not present it is automatically a no vote. The bill provides flexibility for the superintendent to focus time on the many important issues facing education. Stakeholders have worked on this issue.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Kevin Waters, Prime Sponsor; Tyler Muench, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.