SENATE BILL REPORT
SB 5303

As of January 20, 2025

Title: An act relating to extending the water supply milestone for the Yakima river basin integrated plan to 2035.

Brief Description: Extending the water supply milestone for the Yakima river basin integrated plan to 2035.

Sponsors: Senators Warnick, Chapman, Dozier, Nobles and Torres.

Brief History:
Committee Activity: Agriculture & Natural Resources: 1/23/25.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Extends water supply milestones to implement the Yakima River Basin Integrated Water Resource Management Plan from July 1, 2025 to July 1, 2035.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES

Staff: Jeff Olsen (786-7428)

Background: The Yakima River Basin Integrated Water Resource Management Plan (Integrated Plan) was developed by the United States Bureau of Reclamation in collaboration with the Washington Department of Ecology (Ecology) and other interested entities in the Yakima River Basin. The Integrated Plan offers an approach to improving water management in the Yakima River Basin. The stated goals of the Integrated Plan are to protect, mitigate, and enhance fish and wildlife habitat; provide increased operational flexibility to manage instream flows to meet ecological objectives; and improve the reliability of the water supply for irrigation, municipal supply, and domestic uses.

With legislation enacted in 2013, Ecology was directed to develop water supply solutions

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consistent with the Integrated Plan that provide concurrent benefits to both in and out-of-stream uses. The goals include to enhance fish and wildlife resources, improve water viability and reliability, establish more efficient water markets, manage the variability of water supplies, and prepare for the uncertainties of climate change through operational and structural changes.

Ecology must prepare and periodically update a financing plan for the Integrated Plan in which at least half of the cost comes from nonstate sources with a significant portion coming from local beneficiaries of the projects. For any component of the plan that costs more than $100 million the Washington Water Resource Center (Center) must review the cost benefit analysis for the project. The requirements for the Center to perform this work expires July 1, 2025.

In the Integrated Plan, the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) was authorized to purchase land in the Yakima River Basin to be held in the Community Forest Trust under state law. In 2013 DNR purchased 50,241 acres of land to establish the Teanaway Community Forest. DNR was directed to develop a transitional plan for managing the land in cooperation with the Department of Fish and Wildlife and in consultation with local stakeholders. If by June 30, 2025 permits and financing is in place for construction of facilities that produce at least 214,000 acre-feet of water for out of stream and in-stream uses the land will remain in the Community Forest Trust. If not, the Board of Natural Resource is authorized to place the land in the Common School Trust and manage it for the beneficiaries of that trust.

Summary of Bill: Milestones in the Integrated Plan to secure required permits and related analysis of projects for one or more water supply facilities designed to provide at least 214,000-acre feet of water are extended from July 1, 2025 to July 1, 2035.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 17, 2025.

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

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect on June 30, 2025.