
HOUSE BILL 1799

State of Washington 54th Legislature 1995 Regular Session

By Representatives Romero, Jacobsen and Cole

Read first time 02/08/95. Referred to Committee on Natural Resources.

1 AN ACT Relating to wildlife and fisheries habitat on state
2 rangelands; adding a new section to chapter 89.08 RCW; adding a new
3 section to chapter 79.01 RCW; adding a new section to chapter 77.12
4 RCW; adding a new section to chapter 43.51 RCW; creating new sections;
5 and making an appropriation.

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

7 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature finds that the restoration
8 and maintenance of Washington's rangelands and shrub steppe habitat is
9 vital to the long-term benefit of the people of the state, and that the
10 state lacks a consistent policy toward management of state rangelands
11 and wildlife, fish, and water quality protection on these lands.
12 Livestock and wildlife are the primary users of rangelands and are
13 important resources in Washington's economy. Livestock grazing is
14 managed inconsistently by the state agencies that lease rangelands for
15 this purpose. The inconsistencies exist in grazing fee structure,
16 management philosophy, management intensity, and stewardship of other
17 public resources such as water, vegetation, wildlife, and fisheries.
18 The legislature finds that the state agencies do not charge private
19 landowners sufficient fees for grazing leases to cover the full cost of

1 administering the leases, conducting capital improvements, and avoiding
2 or mitigating damages to public resources. The legislature declares
3 that wildlife, fish, and water quality protection, rangeland
4 preservation and sustainability, proper grazing management, and
5 adequate lease fees must be implemented consistently on state lands,
6 and that a state policy be developed to accomplish these goals.

7 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 89.08 RCW
8 to read as follows:

9 (1) The public grazing policy committee is established. The
10 committee shall consist of eleven members. Eight members shall be
11 appointed by the chair of the Washington conservation commission, who
12 shall also function as the chair of the committee. The appointees
13 shall represent the following agencies and interests:

- 14 (a) Washington State University cooperative extension service;
- 15 (b) Department of fish and wildlife;
- 16 (c) Department of natural resources;
- 17 (d) Washington rangelands committee;
- 18 (e) Department of ecology;
- 19 (f) Livestock growers' organization;
- 20 (g) Environmental group; and
- 21 (h) Outdoor recreation interest.

22 (2) The chairs of the house of representatives and the senate
23 committees on natural resources shall also serve on the public grazing
24 policy committee.

25 (3) Members of the committee shall receive no additional
26 compensation for their services except that travel expenses shall be
27 allowed in accordance with RCW 43.03.050 and 43.03.060.

28 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** The public grazing policy committee
29 established in section 2 of this act shall develop recommendations and
30 a rationale for each to the appropriate committees of the legislature
31 on the following policy issues by December 31, 1995:

32 (1) How to control livestock in open range counties from
33 interfering with state management objectives or coordinated objectives
34 developed through the coordinated resource management planning process;

35 (2) The capital investments needed on state rangelands to maximize
36 long-term range productivity and long-term preservation of fish and
37 wildlife habitat and water quality;

1 (3) An appropriate level of state agency funding for management of
2 and research on state rangelands;

3 (4) An appropriate level of state agency staffing for adequate
4 implementation of coordinated resource management planning;

5 (5) Whether grazing leases issued by the state should continue to
6 be categorically exempted from the environmental review process under
7 the state environmental policy act; and

8 (6) How to best coordinate and integrate state, federal, tribal,
9 and agency public rangelands ecosystems management and policies.

10 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** A new section is added to chapter 79.01 RCW
11 to read as follows:

12 The department shall implement a range inventory and monitoring
13 program for application to all department-managed rangelands. The
14 inventory shall be designed to produce reliable estimates of forage
15 production, livestock carrying capacity, and residue remaining after
16 grazing. The program shall use this information to adjust the number
17 of animal unit months, grazing system, and timing to maintain or
18 improve range condition.

19 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 5.** A new section is added to chapter 77.12 RCW
20 to read as follows:

21 The department shall implement a range inventory and monitoring
22 program for application to all department-managed rangelands. The
23 inventory shall be designed to produce reliable estimates of forage
24 production, livestock carrying capacity, and residue remaining after
25 grazing. The program shall use this information to adjust the number
26 of animal unit months, grazing system, and timing to maintain or
27 improve range condition.

28 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 6.** A new section is added to chapter 43.51 RCW
29 to read as follows:

30 The commission shall implement a range inventory and monitoring
31 program for application to all commission-managed rangelands. The
32 inventory shall be designed to produce reliable estimates of forage
33 production, livestock carrying capacity, and residue remaining after
34 grazing. The program shall use this information to adjust the number
35 of animal unit months, grazing system, and timing to maintain or
36 improve range condition.

1 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 7.** By October 31, 1995, the legislative budget
2 committee shall report to the appropriate legislative committees on the
3 livestock grazing programs in the state departments of fish and
4 wildlife and natural resources, and the state parks and recreation
5 commission. The report shall address the following:

6 (1) Costs and benefits of the programs, including indirect costs
7 and benefits to public resources such as fish, wildlife, and water;

8 (2) Adequacy of date and other information used by each agency to
9 develop lease specifications such as the number of animal unit months
10 and timing of grazing;

11 (3) Whether such agency adequately determines the impact of
12 livestock grazing to public resources such as water, wildlife,
13 vegetation, and fisheries;

14 (4) Whether public resource protection standards are conditions of
15 grazing leases;

16 (5) Whether conditions are complied with by the lessee and
17 frequency of compliance; and

18 (6) Whether lessees are monitored for compliance.

19 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 8.** The sum of ten thousand dollars, or as much
20 thereof as may be necessary, is appropriated for the biennium ending
21 June 30, 1997, from the general fund to the state conservation
22 commission for the purposes of administering the project set out in
23 this act.

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