

HOUSE BILL ANALYSIS

E2SSB 6731

Title: An act relating to Lake Whatcom.

Brief Description: Creating a Lake Whatcom landscape plan.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Spanel and Gardner).

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

Meeting Date: February 23, 2000.

Bill Analysis Prepared by: Carole Richmond, Research Analyst (786-7114)

Background:

Lake Whatcom is a primary source of drinking water for residents of Bellingham. The watershed includes a variety of land uses, including forest management and residential development. The Department of Natural Resources manages 50 percent of the watershed for timber production. In chapter 257, laws of 1999, the Legislature asked the department to initiate a pilot project in the watershed to determine what management actions could be taken to achieve water quality standards beyond those required by state law. The department was also required to establish an advisory committee with representatives of state agencies, local governments, and citizens. The pilot project must be completed by June 2000.

Summary of Bill:

The Department of Natural Resources is required to develop a landscape plan for state-owned forests in the Lake Whatcom watershed. The department is required to consult with other forest land owners and with residents. The department is also required to establish an interjurisdictional committee to review site-specific activities and make recommendations. The committee must include two members of the public with an interest in timber management activities.

The landscape plan must address the following topics:

- establishment of riparian management zones along all streams to protect water quality and riparian habitat;
- harvest and road construction on unstable slopes;

- creation of a sustained yield model specific to the Lake Whatcom watershed that encompasses the revised management standards developed under last year's legislation;
- development of a road management plan for the watershed.

The landscape plan must be completed and implementation begun by June 30, 2001. Timber harvest and all road construction on state land must be delayed until the plan is completed.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Senate Passage: 2/11/00, 45-0.