
**Fisheries, Ecology & Parks
Committee**

HB 2302

Brief Description: Restricting beach driving.

Sponsors: Representatives O'Brien, Upthegrove, McCoy, Darneille and Lovick.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Reserves ocean beaches for pedestrian use and prohibits vehicular traffic.
- Removes authority for recreation management plans to allow vehicular use for clam digging and organized recreational events.

Hearing Date: 1/13/2004

Staff: Jeff Olsen (786-7157).

Background:

The Seashore Conservation Area was established in 1967 on the Pacific Ocean to dedicate the use of the ocean beaches to public recreational use. The Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission (Commission) manages the Washington State Seashore Conservation Area in cooperation with federal agencies, other state agencies, and local governments.

The ocean beaches within the Seashore Conservation Area are declared public highways and are open to use subject to state and local management. Restrictions on motorized traffic are limited to April 15th through the day following Labor Day each year.

Local governments having a portion of the Seashore Conservation Area within their boundaries may adopt recreation management plans for ocean beaches, subject to approval by the Commission. Except under certain circumstances, recreation management plans must reserve forty percent of the beach for pedestrian use. Exceptions to the forty percent reserve requirement include vehicular use to: facilitate clam digging; accommodate organized recreational events; remove wood debris; and, remove sand. In designating areas for pedestrian use, recreation management plans shall consider several factors including public safety, statewide interest in recreational use of beaches, protection of shorebird and marine mammal habitats, native beach vegetation, protection of sand dunes, clam beds, economic impacts to local communities, and public access and parking. The Commission may not require local management plans to designate more than forty percent of the beach for pedestrian use.

Summary of Bill:

Ocean beaches in the Seashore Conservation Area are reserved for pedestrian use and vehicular traffic is prohibited. Exceptions for vehicular use include removal of wood debris and sand, but no longer include clam digging and organized recreational events of not more than seven consecutive days. Designation of ocean beaches in the Seashore Conservation Area as public highways is repealed.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.