

FINAL BILL REPORT

2SHB 1580

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Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Establishing a pilot local water management program in one qualified jurisdiction.

Sponsors: House Committee on General Government Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representatives Kessler, Walsh, Santos, Morris, Blake, Takko, Chandler, McCoy, Newhouse, Kretz, Linville, Jacks, Ormsby, Van De Wege, Hurst, Warnick, Nelson, Hinkle, Springer and Kenney).

House Committee on Agriculture & Natural Resources
House Committee on General Government Appropriations
Senate Committee on Environment, Water & Energy

Background:

Water Resource Inventory Areas.

The Water Resources Act (Act) directs the Department of Ecology (DOE) to develop a comprehensive state water resource program for making decisions on future water resource allocation and use. The Act permits the DOE to develop the program in segments. Under the Act, the DOE has divided the state into 62 Water Resource Inventory Areas (WRIAs).

Modifying Existing Water Rights.

There are several fundamental elements of a water right. One is its priority. Other elements of the water right include the amount of water that may be withdrawn from a particular water source, the time of year and point from which the water may be withdrawn, how the water can be used (such as an agricultural or municipal use), and where the water may be used. Certain elements of a water right may be modified with the approval of the DOE if the modification would not impair other existing water rights. An approved modification does not affect the priority date of the right. Alterations in water rights are referred to in statute as transfers, changes, and amendments of water rights.

Watershed Planning.

State watershed planning laws provide a process for conducting watershed planning through a locally initiated process. If planning is conducted under this process, it must include a component on current and future water availability and use. It may include components regarding in-stream flows, water quality, and habitat.

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

Walla Walla Comprehensive Water Management Structure.

In 2008 the Legislature provided the DOE \$195,000 from the State General Fund for Fiscal Year 2009 to design a comprehensive water management structure for the Walla Walla River Basin.

The Legislature requested that the structure address the allocation of functions, authorities, resource requirements, and issues associated with interstate watershed management of the basin.

A report was written to the Legislature outlining the proposed governance and water management structure in December 2008.

Summary:

The Water Management Board.

The initiating entities consist of the county boards of commissioners within the planning area, the city council of the largest Washington city in the planning area, the largest water user in the planning area, and all affected federally recognized tribes within the planning area.

Initiating entities may collectively petition the DOE to establish a Water Management Board (Board). The initiating entities must demonstrate that there is community support for the development of a local water management plan, that there is commitment to enhance stream flows for fish, and that there is an adequate monitoring network in place. Before approving the creation of a Board, the DOE must require that an in-stream flow rule is in place in the planning area, the planning area is within a fish critical basin with severely impaired flows, and the watershed planning unit has completed watershed and salmon recovery implementation plans. The DOE must also give strong consideration to basins that have completed a judicial proceeding to adjudicate water rights.

Composition of the Water Management Board.

The Board must be composed of: (1) representatives from each of the counties within the planning area; (2) a representative from the largest city in the planning area; (3) a representative of the largest water user in the planning area; (4) a representative appointed by the conservation districts in the planning area; (5) a representative of the planning area water users; (6) a representative of environmental interests in the planning area; and (7) a representative of citizens at large. In addition, all affected federally recognized tribes within the planning area must be invited to participate and are able to appoint one member to the Board. Each Board member serves a two-year term and may be reappointed.

The Policy Advisory Group and the Water Resource Panel.

The Board must create a policy advisory group that must assist and advise the Board in, among other things, coordinating and developing water resource programs, planning, and activities within the planning area. The Board must also create a water resource panel that must provide technical assistance for the development of the local water plan, advice to the Board on the criteria for establishment of local water plans, and suggestions for the approval, denial, or modification of the local water plans.

Duties of the Water Management Board.

The Board must assume all duties, responsibilities, and activities of the watershed planning unit, as well as develop strategic actions for the planning area, make the water management program effective, administer the local water plan process, oversee local water plan implementation, manage banked water, acquire rights, represent the interests of the planning area, and enter into agreements with water right holders to not divert water.

The Board may provide for its own funding by adopting fees or soliciting or accepting grants, loans, or donations.

Reports to the Legislature.

The Board, in collaboration with the DOE, must provide reports to the Legislature every three years beginning in 2012. The reports must summarize the actions, funding, and accomplishments of the Board, as well as any recommendations for improvement of the local water plan process.

Water Banking.

The Board may establish a mechanism to bank water within the planning area. The Board may accept a surface water or groundwater right for banking on a permanent or temporary basis. Temporarily banked water remains in the ownership of the water right holder, and permanently banked water must be transferred to the state as a trust water right. The banked water rights or banked portions of water rights are available under the local water plan for stream flow enhancement.

Water rights banked for in-stream flow must not have an extent and validity review and may not be authorized for other purposes. In addition, banked water rights or banked portions of water rights are not subject to loss by forfeiture. When a temporary deposit is withdrawn from banking, the time period that the water right was banked may not be included in the five years of prior water use review under the relinquishment statute.

The Local Water Plan.

The local water plan may be submitted by a water user or group of water users to the Board for approval by the Board and the DOE. The local water plan may be effective for a term of one to 10 years. The Board must provide a 30-day public notice period on the proposed local water plan. The final decision of the DOE on the local water plan is appealable to the Pollution Control Hearings Board.

A local water plan expires by its own terms, by withdrawal of one or more water users to the local water plan, or upon agreement by all parties to the contract. If the local water plan operates for more than five years and then expires, the water users may request that the elements of the local water plan be made permanent authorizations and conditions for use of the water rights.

Water rights in the local water plan are not subject to a review of the extent and validity of the water right, nor subject to loss by forfeiture.

Location of the Pilot Program.

The pilot of the local water management program must be located in WRIA 32.

Expiration of the Act.

This act expires June 30, 2019.

Votes on Final Passage:

House	97	0	
Senate	48	0	(Senate amended)
House	97	0	(House concurred)

Effective: July 26, 2009