
**Agriculture & Natural Resources
Committee**

HB 2235

Brief Description: Improving water management.

Sponsors: Representative Blake.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Allows an application to the Department of Ecology for a change in a water right to be sufficient cause for nonuse.
- Directs the Department of Ecology to conduct a data gap analysis.
- Requires the Department of Ecology to enhance their groundwater and surface water monitoring programs.

Hearing Date: 2/19/09

Staff: Jaclyn Ford (786-7339)

Background:

Relinquishment.

Water rights may be relinquished when a person, for five or more consecutive years, abandons or voluntarily fails without sufficient cause to beneficially use water in accordance with their recorded right's terms. The water code provides a "sufficient cause" list of statutory excuses that protect a water right from relinquishment.

Data Collection.

The Department of Ecology (DOE) has the ability to monitor groundwater areas, collect data, and keep a water resources information system as part of their Water Resource Data Program. Most of the general information collected is found on the DOE website. However data collection is maintained throughout many of the individual programs at the DOE, local governments, and the federal government, and has not be combined into one uniform database.

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.

Summary of Bill:

Relinquishment.

A water right change application is sufficient cause for nonuse of a water right. The DOE must not consider the time when a water right was pending a final determination on a change application when ascertaining whether relinquishment has occurred.

Data Collection.

The DOE's groundwater and surface water monitoring programs must be enhanced by standardizing methods, quality assurance, and data management practices, as well as migrating existing DOE and water resources inventory areas (WRIAs) data to a central database.

By June 30, 2010, the DOE must prepare a gap analysis that evaluates existing groundwater and surface water information on water levels and water quality throughout Washington's WRIAs.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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