

SENATE BILL REPORT

ESHB 1204

AS REPORTED BY COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT & NATURAL RESOURCES,
MARCH 25, 1991

Brief Description: Changing provisions relating to natural resources conservation areas.

SPONSORS: House Committee on Natural Resources & Parks (originally sponsored by Representatives Riley, Beck, Fraser, Wynne, Winsley and Jacobsen).

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES & PARKS

SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT & NATURAL RESOURCES

Majority Report: Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators Metcalf, Chairman; Oke, Vice Chairman; Amondson, Barr, Conner, Patterson, Snyder, and Sutherland.

Staff: Vic Moon (786-7469)

Hearing Dates: March 25, 1991

BACKGROUND:

In 1987 the Legislature created a new land management designation called natural resources conservation area. These are areas that retain their natural character and have plants, animals, geological, archeological, scenic or similar features of critical importance to the people of Washington. They are to be managed by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Among the various findings that the Legislature made in creating this designation was that these areas provide opportunities for low impact public recreation.

The Legislature identified four areas as natural resources conservation areas including: Mt. Si, Woodard Bay, Dishman Hills, and Cypress Island.

The conservation area account was created in 1987 to receive moneys generated through a real estate excise tax surcharge that was effective through June 30, 1989. Moneys in the account are authorized to be spent only for acquisition of natural resources conservation areas. As of March 1990 there was \$2,832,000 remaining in the account.

The natural resources conservation areas stewardship account was created to ensure proper and continuing management of natural resources conservation areas. There is no statutorily designated source of moneys for the account. The 1990 supplemental operating budget transferred \$2,832,000 from the conservation area account into this account.

The 1989 and 1990 operating budgets provided funds to acquire land and timber from the common school trust to be managed by DNR as natural resources conservation areas or as natural area preserves. DNR also received moneys for acquisition of lands from a 1990 capital budget appropriation for implementation of a proposal by the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Coalition.

The State Treasurer is authorized to invest fund balances. Twenty percent of the investment income must be deposited in the general fund.

SUMMARY:

The legislative finding on natural resources conservation area is expanded to include the possibility of a broader range of low impact public uses rather than just low impact recreation. These uses include public recreation as well as other uses that do not adversely affect resource values, are appropriate to maintaining the area in a relatively unmodified natural setting, and do not detract from the long-term ecological processes.

The purpose for which moneys in the natural resources conservation areas stewardship account may be spent is expanded to include natural area preserves and other lands to be managed under Chapter 43.98A (Habitat Conservation and Outdoor Recreation Lands).

The balance of the conservation area account is transferred to the natural resources conservation areas stewardship account.

Appropriation: none

Revenue: none

Fiscal Note: available

SUMMARY OF PROPOSED SENATE AMENDMENT:

The striking amendment is the same as SSB 5612 which passed the Senate earlier this session. In addition to the existing language in the House bill, the department may use interest from the account. Earnings from investments are placed in the stewardship account and the State Treasurer may not deduct a management fee. Two million dollars will stay in the account and the department may use the interest for conservation area management.

TESTIMONY FOR:

The Senate version in SSB 5612 is superior to the House version. The House bill would have the effect of using the \$2 million and in a few years nothing would be left. The Senate bill lets the department use the interest and keep the \$2 million as principal.

TESTIMONY AGAINST: None

TESTIFIED: Rep. Mike Riley (for); Stan Biles, Dept. of Natural Resources (for); Judy Turpin, Washington Environmental Council (for)