

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5206

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

Brief Description: Funding search and rescue activities.

SPONSORS: Senators Matson, Vognild and Amondson.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT & NATURAL RESOURCES

Majority Report: Do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

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

Staff: Vic Moon (786-7469)

Hearing Dates: January 29, 1991; February 25, 1991

BACKGROUND:

There are approximately 8,000 active search and rescue volunteers in the state. These search and rescue volunteers provide service to the citizens of the state through tens of thousands of hours of service each year. The value of search and rescue services is partially dependent on adequately trained volunteers with the skills necessary to locate and rescue individuals in trouble without jeopardizing themselves in the process. At the present time no volunteer training is supported by the state. Local training is provided as local jurisdictions have the ability to organize and fund it, but because these are largely volunteer organizations, the amount of training available is extremely limited. There is no single point within the state that has established training standards or operational standards to ensure a consistent quality of service.

Approximately \$28,000 per biennium is included in the department's current authorized budget to cover the claims of emergency workers as required in RCW 38.52. This level of funding is not adequate to cover all of the valid claims which have been submitted to the department. In 1990, the Department of Community Development received claims totalling over \$95,000 and the department's continued ability to cover all valid claims is dependent on an increase in appropriated funding or on a new funding source.

SUMMARY:

The Legislature recognizes the efforts of the 8,000 volunteers in Washington State who are active in search and rescue operations. Volunteer emergency management worker, search and rescue worker, and official search and rescue mission are

defined to fit the programs in Washington State. The Department of Community Development is authorized to use funds from the search and rescue account to reimburse and compensate search and rescue workers in accordance with RCW 38.52. The department may use funds to develop and administer programs to train and support search and rescue volunteers. The department must coordinate and consult with the Washington State Search and Rescue Advisory Council in establishing training programs and materials.

A search and rescue grant program is established within the Department of Community Development to provide grants for training, which shall include costs and reimbursement for volunteers attending, and grants for new and preventive search and rescue training courses. All grants authorized by the act must be matched dollar per dollar with an in-kind match. Application periods, criteria, eligibility, and other regulations for administration of grants will be established by the department in consultation with the Search and Rescue Advisory Council. Grant approval shall be made by the department in consultation with the Advisory Council.

A search and rescue account is established in the custody of the State Treasurer and the money shall come from the surcharge on off-road vehicle use permits. The disbursements from the fund shall be on authorization from the Director of the Department of Community Development and subject to the allotment procedure of RCW 43.88. No appropriation will be required for disbursements.

A surcharge on off-road vehicle fees is established. The fee will be \$5, which will be in addition to the existing fee of \$5. The surcharge will be placed in the search and rescue fund created by this act.

Appropriation: none

Revenue: yes

Fiscal Note: available

TESTIMONY FOR:

Search and rescue activities need some further support for training and to reimburse people for their lost or damaged articles used in the search and rescue process.

TESTIMONY AGAINST: None

TESTIFIED: PRO: James W. Hall, Yakima County Sheriff's Office; H. Brooks Hanford, Whitman County Search and Rescue; Virgil E. Harder, Trailblazers; William Lokey, Pierce County Department of Emergency Management, Washington State Emergency Management Association; Cathy Turk, Department of Community Development; James R. Daily, Thurston County Emergency Management, Thurston County Sheriff's Office; David A. Yates, Thurston County Explorer Search and Rescue Post 278; David C. Devoe, Thurston County Search and Rescue, Thurston County Emergency Management

