

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1442

As Reported By House Committee On:
Natural Resources & Parks

Title: An act relating to integrated and coordinated water resource management.

Brief Description: Creating a watershed management task force.

Sponsors: Representatives R. Johnson, Roland and J. Kohl.

Brief History:

Reported by House Committee on:
Natural Resources & Parks, February 23, 1993, DPS.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES & PARKS

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 7 members: Representatives Pruitt, Chair; R. Johnson, Vice Chair; Dunshee; Linville; Sheldon; Valle; and Wolfe.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 4 members: Representatives Morton, Ranking Minority Member; Stevens, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Schoesler; and Thomas.

Staff: Linda Byers (786-7129).

Background: A number of entities are involved in the management of water resources, including a number of state agencies, tribes, city and county governments, and an array of special districts. Legislative entities have also been heavily involved in water resource policy. Most recently, the Joint Select Committee on Flood Damage Reduction concluded its legislatively mandated work with a number of findings and recommendations. Among these were findings that (1) flood and stormwater issues are interconnected with other water resource issues, and (2) that planning, permitting, and funding for water resources are not well coordinated.

Summary of Substitute Bill: The Legislature finds that there is a need to comprehensively review the policies and institutional framework governing the management, protection, and allocation of water resources in the state. The Washington Water Resources Policy Commission is created.

Membership on the commission is established to include the governor, members of the Legislature, members to represent specific interests, and members of federally recognized Indian tribes. The commission is directed to conduct a comprehensive review of water resource management, including completion of 11 specific tasks. Four of these tasks must be completed by no later than November 1994. The commission is scheduled to expire in December 1996. The bill does contain an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The original bill directed the Department of Ecology to create a watershed management task force. The substitute bill instead creates a water resources policy commission, establishes membership to the commission, and assigns the commission with specific tasks and an expiration date.

Fiscal Note: Requested February 24, 1993.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.

Testimony For (Original Bill): Currently there are 12 independently operated state programs dealing with water governance. Decision making is fractured, and timeliness of decisions is a problem. There are a number of watershed projects underway; a watershed approach to governance is a good idea. There are problems now between and sometimes within agencies running different programs in an area or basin. The idea of coordinated water resource management is a good one.

Testimony Against (Original Bill): The goal of the task force should be more defined, as should its focus. There is more than one definition of "watershed." The study could be expanded. Ecology may not be the appropriate agency to create and manage the task force. Representation on the task force should be more balanced. The relationship between the task force, the Joint Select Committee on Water Resource Policy, and the Chelan Forum is unclear. The task force should be given specific questions to answer.

Witnesses: Representative Rob Johnson, prime sponsor; Terry Husseman, Department of Ecology (in favor); Kathleen Collins, Association of Washington Cities (in favor, with comments); Mike Yeager, Washington Forest Protection Association (in favor, with concerns); Sandie Nelson, Northwest Rivers Council (in favor of concept); Dayle Ann Stratton, Black Hills Audubon (in favor of concept); and Tom Mortimer, Washington Water Utility Council (in favor, with questions).