

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1785

As Reported By House Committee On:
Environmental Affairs

Title: An act relating to investing in the creation of jobs to restore and enhance Washington's estuaries, waterways, forests, and watersheds.

Brief Description: Creating jobs to restore and enhance Washington's estuaries, waterways, forests, and watersheds.

Sponsors: Representatives Locke, J. Kohl, Rust, Jacobsen, Wineberry, Shin, Dunshee, Holm, Pruitt, Jones, Finkbeiner, King, Basich, Quall, Orr, Johanson, Leonard and Anderson.

Brief History:

Reported by House Committee on:
Environmental Affairs, March 3, 1993, DPS.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 10 members: Representatives Rust, Chair; Flemming, Vice Chair; Horn, Ranking Minority Member; Bray; Foreman; Holm; L. Johnson; J. Kohl; Linville; and Roland.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 4 members: Representatives Van Luven, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Edmondson; Hansen; and Sheahan.

Staff: Rick Anderson (786-7114).

Background: Local governments are required to develop several types of water-related plans. Examples of these planning requirements include: shoreline management plans, stormwater plans, drinking water plans, flood plans, and watershed action plans. These plans often identify actions necessary to improve existing problems, but financing for these actions is often difficult to obtain.

Natural resource based industries are, and have historically been, an important part of the state's economy. These industries are in relative decline as compared to other sectors of the state's economy, such as aerospace and agriculture.

Water quality and habit degradation is negatively affecting many of these industries.

There are efforts at the state and national level to find creative ways to finance ready-to-go projects that create jobs and improve water quality and habitats.

Summary of Substitute Bill: An Interagency Council on Environmental and Forest Restoration is created within the Office of the Governor. The 15 member council consists of the governor, who serves as chair, representatives of nine state agencies and representatives of tribes, labor, environmental groups, cities, and counties. Non-agency members are not allowed to participate in funding decisions. The council is to be staffed by the Department of Community Development.

A legislative intent is established to fund environmental and forest restoration projects through the operating and capital budgets during fiscal year 1994. A process is established directing the governor to consider placing unanticipated federal funds into the environmental and forest restoration account or to direct agencies receiving federal funds to use those funds in a manner consistent with the criteria established in the bill.

The environment and forest restoration account is established in the state treasury. The account is to be funded by principal and interest repayments, and through unspecified state and federal funds. Money in the account is subject to legislative appropriation. The Department of Community Development is to administer the account. At least 10 percent of annual revenues are to be used for the Washington Conservation Corps. No more than 3 percent can be used for administration. State and local agencies, tribes, and private non-profit organizations are eligible for grants and loans from the account. The account may not be used to hire permanent state employees.

Beginning in 1993, the council has four principle duties: 1) to assist state and local agencies in implementing effective restoration projects; 2) to evaluate unemployment profile data; 3) to review projects funded in fiscal year 1994 for consistency with the criteria established in the bill; and 4) to make recommendations to streamline grant administration for programs that address environmental and forest restoration.

Beginning in 1994, the council is also required to make funding decisions on environmental and forest restoration projects. Projects funded must meet specified criteria, such as: improving water and habitat quality; creating labor

intensive jobs; meeting multiple objectives, and implementing state or federal plans. The council is directed to avoid funding projects that include rule-making, planning, or public education activities.

The Puget Sound Water Quality Authority and the departments of Ecology and Natural Resources must jointly create two watershed analysis teams. The teams are directed to evaluate the interactions of water quality and water use. One team is to operate in eastern Washington and one team is to operate in western Washington.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The substitute bill deletes a number of provisions included in the original bill. All provisions relating to increased taxes are deleted. The process of equally distributing any funds in the account to the Puget Sound Water Quality Authority and the departments of Ecology and Natural Resources is deleted. The provision making the Puget Sound Water Quality plan mandatory for state and local agencies is deleted as is the sunset extension for the authority. A reference to wage levels for workers hired for a restoration job is deleted.

The substitute bill creates the interagency council to distribute funds in the environmental and forest restoration account. The minimum funding level of the Washington Conservation Corps is increased from 5 to 10 percent. The provision establishing two watershed action teams is added.

Fiscal Note: Requested February 9, 1993.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: The bill will create jobs and improve the environment by implementing existing plans. The bill will restore funding to Washington Conservation Corps. The corps provides jobs and skills to disadvantaged youth while implementing important restoration projects at low cost. The bill will help the shellfish industries by improving water quality. New and existing cars create water pollution mainly through emissions and wear from brake linings and tires.

Testimony Against: New cars should not be taxed because they create less pollution than older cars and because new cars are already extensively taxed. Recreational boaters should not be required to pay additional taxes. The bill will tax bunker fuel and cause disruptions in the shipping industry.

Witnesses: Representative Gary Locke, Prime Sponsor (pro); Kathy Fletcher, People for Puget Sound (pro); Fred Olson, Ak-WA Incorporated (con); Jenny Coffing, citizen (pro); Ward Sagen, citizen (pro); Mark Greenberg, Pacific Northern Oil (con); Ray Shindler, Purse Seine Vessel Owners Association (pro); Jim Boldt, Washington Auto Dealers Association (pro with amendments); Joan Thomas, Washington Environmental Council (pro); Larry Phillips, King County Council (pro); Mike Ryherd, Washington Wildlife Recreation Coalition (pro); Sally Hicks, Department of Fisheries Manager, Retired (pro); and Ron Wagner, Blackball Transport (concerns).