

HOUSE BILL REPORT

ESHB 2741

As Passed Legislature

Title: An act relating to coordinated, watershed-based natural resource planning.

Brief Description: Coordinating watershed-based natural resource planning.

Sponsors: By House Committee on Natural Resources & Parks (originally sponsored by Representatives Linville, Pruitt, King, Rust, Valle, R. Johnson, Roland, Rayburn, R. Meyers, J. Kohl, Kremen, L. Johnson and Karahalios).

Brief History:

Reported by House Committee on:
Natural Resources & Parks, February 4, 1994, DPS;
Passed House, February 14, 1994, 95-0;
Amended by Senate;
Conference Committee Report adopted.
Passed Legislature, March 10, 1994, 94-0.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES & PARKS

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 11 members: Representatives Pruitt, Chair; R. Johnson, Vice Chair; Stevens, Ranking Minority Member; McMorris, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Dunshee; Linville; Schoesler; Sheldon; B. Thomas; Valle and Wolfe.

Staff: Linda Byers (786-7129).

Background: A number of federal, state, and local government agencies, tribes, individuals, and organizations are exploring natural resource management issues using watersheds as the unit of management. A survey of significant watershed-based activity compiled this fall by the Governor's office indicates that there are several hundred such watershed-based efforts going on in the state.

Summary of Bill: The Watershed Coordinating Council is created, comprised of the Commissioner of Public Lands or the commissioner's designee, and the director or designee from the departments of Transportation, Agriculture, Ecology, Fish and Wildlife, Health, Community, Trade and Economic Development, the Interagency Committee for Outdoor

Recreation, the Puget Sound Water Quality Authority, and the Conservation Commission. The council shall coordinate state agency watershed planning and implementation activities. The council shall also coordinate its activities with federal, local, and tribal governments. The council expires in June 1997.

By December 15, 1994, the Watershed Coordinating Council is to provide to the Legislature a summary of all state agency watershed programs and recommendations on the following: a definition of the geographical unit for watershed planning and implementation processes; common protocols for data collection and analysis; the availability of data on the condition of the state's watersheds; ways to overcome barriers to state agency cooperation in watershed planning and implementation; ways to minimize duplication and overlap and to improve efficiency in watershed planning and implementation; and new sources of funding and reallocation of existing funding for watershed planning and implementation activities.

The Legislature also creates the Watershed Policy Task Force, to complete the following tasks: development of goals and measurable objectives for watersheds in the state; identification of strategies for establishing and funding locally or regionally based watershed planning and implementation activities to help achieve these goals and objectives; identification of barriers to cooperation and possible incentives to encourage various entities to participate in watershed planning and implementation; recommendations for integration of state watershed planning and implementation with local land use planning; and recommendations for coordination with student and citizen watershed protection efforts. Members of the task force come from the Watershed Coordinating Council, the House of Representatives, the Senate, and various interest groups. The task force is to complete its tasks and report to the Legislature by December 1995; the task force expires in June 1996.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: The Department of Natural Resources has already convened a group like this. They are finding that there is overlap and duplication, and that data collection methods differ. This legislation gives the group a firm deadline and establishes that the Legislature supports the effort to coordinate natural resource planning efforts. In the future, natural resource management will clearly be

watershed-based; this effort will help keep the state on that path. This effort represents good regulatory reform and offers a more efficient way to protect the environment.

Testimony Against: Since the effort is already underway, there is no reason for legislation. Perhaps one of the executive branch agencies should handle the coordination. The language regarding local government involvement should be stronger. The Department of Health should be included. It would be better to give the existing effort a chance to work without legislation.

Witnesses: Kaleen Cottingham, Department of Natural Resources; Judy Turpin, Washington Environmental Council; Paul Parker, Washington State Association of Counties; Bruce Wishart, Sierra Club; Herman Rux, Jr.; Naki Stevens, People for Puget Sound; Dawn Vyvyan, Yakima Tribe and Skagit System Cooperative; Joe LaTourrette, Washington Rivers Council (all in favor); John Gorman, Washington Forest Protection Association; Nels Hanson, Washington Farm Forestry Association; Kathleen Collins, Association of Washington Cities; Kent Lebsack and Mary Burke, Washington Cattlemens Association; John Kirner, Tacoma Utilities (all with concerns); and Earl Tower, Association of Washington Business (opposed).