

HOUSE BILL REPORT

ESHB 2741

As Amended by Senate

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.

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: State agencies involved in watershed-based natural resource planning efforts are required to coordinate their planning and implementation processes. The various state agencies are to meet as a group and include at these meetings representatives from federal agencies, local governments, tribes, private landowners, environmental groups, and other interested parties. The Commissioner of Public Lands will coordinate the group's discussions, and

the Department of Natural Resources will provide staff support for the group.

By December 1994, the Department of Natural Resources will prepare an interim report for the Legislature based on the group's discussions and findings. The report is to include, at a minimum, the identification of barriers to coordination and cooperation; recommendations on the collection, storage, and maintenance of information; identification of overlap in existing and proposed projects; and examination of the possible establishment of a central depository for information.

The Governor is directed to establish a process which yields: (1) the identification of strategies for developing cooperative watershed-based planning efforts, (2) identification of approaches for coordinating and financing the implementation of watershed-based plans, and (3) recommendations for on-going, program-level coordination of watershed-based natural resource planning and management activities. The Governor is to submit his recommendations to the Legislature by December, 1995.

EFFECT OF SENATE AMENDMENT(S): The Senate striking amendment removes the assignments given to the Governor, adds assignments to the group coordinated by the Department of Natural Resources, and adds members to that group. The striking amendment also creates the Watershed Council. The new council is co-chaired by the Commissioner of Public Lands and the director of the Department of Fish and Wildlife. The council is to coordinate the allocation of state resources in conjunction with federal, tribal, private, and local resources for watershed restoration and protection. The council is to report to the Legislature by December 15, 1994, on its plan for coordinating and targeting existing and new state, federal, and local resources toward the goal of precluding endangered species listings. The military department is directed to consult with the council to identify and implement training and readiness exercises to assist in watershed restoration efforts.

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).

VOTE ON FINAL PASSAGE:

Yeas 95; Excused 3

Excused: Representatives Cothern, Riley, Thibaudeau