

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1762

As Reported By House Committee On:
Natural Resources & Parks

Title: An act relating to access to rivers for recreational purposes.

Brief Description: Directing the parks and recreation commission to study river access.

Sponsors: Representatives R. Johnson, Thomas, Valle, Wolfe, Rust, Roland, Pruitt, King and Jacobsen.

Brief History:

Reported by House Committee on:
Natural Resources & Parks, March 3, 1993, DPS.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES & PARKS

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 8 members: Representatives Pruitt, Chair; R. Johnson, Vice Chair; Dunshee; Linville; Schoesler; Thomas; Valle; and Wolfe.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 3 members: Representatives Morton, Ranking Minority Member; Stevens, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; and Sheldon.

Staff: Linda Byers (786-7129).

Background: A number of people in Washington engage in river recreational activities. In some cases, people wanting to reach rivers trespass on private lands or access rivers by other means rather than using public access facilities.

Summary of Substitute Bill: The State Parks and Recreation Commission is directed to examine the current use of the state's rivers for recreational purposes, the existing amount of river access, and the need for additional or improved public river access. As part of this examination, the commission is given five specific tasks to complete, including an assessment of areas of overuse and trespass, and an evaluation of the concept, feasibility, and appropriateness of user or access fees for river

recreationists. The commission is to report its findings and conclusions to the Legislature by December 1, 1994.

The bill contains an appropriation of \$100,000 from the general fund to the State Parks and Recreation Commission for the purpose of conducting this study.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: In the original bill, the State Parks and Recreation Commission is directed to solicit input and recommendations from the Interagency Committee for Outdoor Recreation, the Department of Natural Resources, interested county and city governments, and other agencies with recreational lands or programs. The substitute bill adds private property owners to this list.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Appropriation: \$100,000 from the general fund to the State Parks and Recreation Commission.

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

Testimony For: Currently the commission does not have adequate data on river access; this bill would allow them to collect this important information. A citizens' group conducted a survey of the sites people use to access the Skykomish River. Of 64 identified sites, only two were legal public access sites. Private property owners should not have their land used for public access. Access is often difficult to find. Sometimes people do dangerous things to get to the rivers. Trespassing is a serious problem. Inappropriate parking and traffic congestion are also problems. In other states, providing appropriate public access has boosted local economies, cut down on trespassing, and improved safety. Abandoned railroad corridors offer possible solutions for increasing access. Recreational fishermen need access too. With the limited public access available now, the existing areas are overcrowded, putting increased pressure on the habitat in those areas.

Testimony Against: The commission is not soliciting input from property owners. The \$100,000 is too much for this study.

Witnesses: Tom France, Washington State Parks; Sandie Nelson, Northwest Rivers Council; Andy Calvery, Boeing Employees Whitewater & Touring Club; Tom McGaffey, landowner; Michael Parent, Washington Kayak Club; Joe Ganem, Rails To Trails; Don Schluter, Northwest Rivers Council (all in favor); and Richard Welch, landowner (opposed).