

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2741

As Reported By House Committee On:
Natural Resources & Parks

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

Brief Description: Coordinating watershed-based natural resource planning.

Sponsors: 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.

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 Substitute Bill: State agencies involved in watershed-based natural resource planning efforts are required to coordinate their planning 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.

By December 1995, the group is to report to the Legislature on regional natural resource management goals, recommendations on ways to support local watershed management plans, and on a process for ongoing, program-level coordination of watershed-based planning and management activities.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The substitute bill reorganizes the findings section, adds an additional item for the group to address, and provides for an interim report date, followed by a final report date one year later.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: 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).