

HOUSE BILL REPORT

ESSB 5454

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, and watersheds.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Trade, Technology & Economic Development (originally sponsored by Senators Fraser, Skratek, Barr, Haugen, Pelz, Prentice, Owen, Niemi, von Reichbauer, Quigley and M. Rasmussen).

Brief History:

Reported by House Committee on:
Environmental Affairs, March 29, 1993, DPA.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Rust, Chair; Flemming, Vice Chair; Horn, Ranking Minority Member; Bray; Foreman; Holm; 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 habitat 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 Amended Bill: The bill creates an interagency council on environmental and forest restoration within the office of the governor. The 15 member council consists of the governor, who serves as chair, 10 state agencies (the seven state natural resource agencies, the Conservation Commission, the Department of Community Development and the Employment Security Department), 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.

The bill establishes a legislative intent 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 is to be used for administration. State and local agencies, tribes, and private non-profit organizations are eligible for grants and loans from the account.

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, implementing state or federal plans; and others. The council is directed to avoid funding projects that include significant 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 consider water quality and quantity issues and interactions of water quality and water use. One team is to operate in eastern Washington and one team is to operate in western Washington.

Amended Bill Compared to Substitute Bill: The amendment deletes a provision that distributes one-third of total funds each to forested areas, the Puget Sound basin, and non-Puget Sound areas. A provision specifying that restoration jobs pay wages equal or greater than twice the state minimum wage is deleted. The Conservation Commission and the Interagency Council for Outdoor Recreation are added to the interagency council. The Department of Trade and Economic Development and the work force training and education coordinating board are deleted from the council. The provisions stating funding priorities during the first year are deleted.

The amendment adds several new duties for the interagency council beginning in 1993. A provision is added directing the governor to use unanticipated federal funds in a manner consistent with the act. Two watershed teams are established, subject to specific funding in the biennial budget, to coordinate watershed analysis.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Amended 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 the 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: None.

Witnesses: Senator Karen Fraser, prime sponsor (pro); Naki Stevens, People for Puget Sound (pro); Kimberly Ordon, Tulalip Tribes (pro); Sheri Tonn, Puget Sound Water Quality Authority (pro); Bruce Wishart, Sierra Club (pro); Linda Arcuri, Washington Association of Conservation Districts (pro); Steve Lansing, Lutheran Public Policy Office (pro); Ed Thorpe, Coalition for Clean Water (pro); and Jeff Parsons, National Audubon Society (pro).