

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5773

AS REPORTED BY COMMITTEE ON ENERGY & UTILITIES, MARCH 3, 1993

Brief Description: Allowing counties to establish coordinated water resources programs.

SPONSORS: Senators Fraser and Barr

SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY & UTILITIES

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5773 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Sutherland, Chairman; Jesernig, Vice Chairman; Owen, A. Smith, Vognild, and Williams.

Staff: Ben Barnes (786-7198)

Hearing Dates: February 22, 1993

BACKGROUND:

Although the Growth Management Act requires certain counties to develop comprehensive plans for land use, housing, capital facilities, transportation, and public utilities, no specific direction is provided for integrating water resources management with growth planning activities.

It is recommended that counties be authorized to coordinate the planning and management of water resources within their respective jurisdictions.

SUMMARY:

Any county which is required to or chooses to adopt a comprehensive land use plan is authorized to assume the responsibility for coordinating the planning or management of some or all water resources within all or a portion of the county on a watershed or island-wide basis.

The county legislative authority of any county which is required to or chooses to adopt a comprehensive land use plan may establish, by resolution, a coordinated water resources program. In developing its proposal for a coordinated water resources program, the county legislative authority must consult with the affected cities, tribes, and special districts.

A county assuming the responsibility for coordinating the planning or management of water resources is directed to work with the state Departments of Ecology and Health, affected Indian tribes, the local health agency, affected cities, and special districts within the watershed. If a watershed is located in more than one county, each of the affected counties

should participate in the coordinated effort. Where appropriate, the Puget Sound Water Quality Authority must also be invited to participate. It is also recommended that the Departments of Natural Resources, Fisheries, and Wildlife; other interested state agencies; relevant agencies of the federal government; and other public and private interested parties be invited to participate.

After convening the necessary parties and agreeing upon the boundaries of the watersheds or islands included in the coordinated water resources program, the county legislative authority shall by resolution or ordinance describe the boundaries of the water resources program, and to the extent possible, describe its scope and the plan for coordinating the management of water resources within its boundaries.

A county establishing a coordinated water resources program is required to evaluate existing programs and districts which manage water resources to determine whether they should be eliminated or consolidated to eliminate duplication of services or to improve efficient management of water resources. The county may consolidate, combine, or otherwise coordinate planning and management activities which occur within the watershed or upon the island.

A county which has established a coordinated water resources program may establish a coordinated water resources district. The coordinated water resources district may finance the elements of the water resources program through any combination of tax revenues, fees, rates, and federal, state, or private grants. The county may contract with existing public utilities to collect the fees or charges. A reduced fee level may be established for low-income persons.

A county, city, or special district may authorize up to 5 percent of existing revenues collected within the watershed to establish a coordinated water resources district, watershed planning, public education and participation, and coordination of management within the watershed.

The Departments of Community Development and Ecology are directed to give priority to participants in coordinated water resources programs when awarding certain grants and loans.

The Office of Financial Management is directed to work with the Departments of Ecology, Health, and Community Development to develop a proposal for combining current funding sources available for local governments and for providing new state matching funds to counties that implement a coordinated water resources program. The proposal must be submitted to the Legislature by November 1, 1993.

EFFECT OF PROPOSED SUBSTITUTE:

The authority to assess new taxes, fees, and charges contained in the original bill is expressly deleted.

Language is added to clarify that counties may only coordinate their own water resource activities with the voluntary participation of affected state agencies, cities, tribes, and special districts.

The percentage of existing revenues that a county, city, or special district is authorized to allocate towards water resource activities is increased from 5 percent to 10 percent. A participating county is also required to establish a special water resources account for receiving and expending any funds for coordinating water resource activities.

Appropriation: none

Revenue: none

Fiscal Note: available

TESTIMONY FOR:

The bill provides counties, at their option, the financial ability and incentive to coordinate planning and management of water resources on a watershed or island-wide basis and thereby eliminate waste and duplication in the planning and management of water resources.

TESTIMONY AGAINST:

The bill authorizes counties to assume responsibilities and powers allocated to other governmental entities. It would also result in the imposition of additional local taxes, fees, and other charges.

TESTIFIED: Mike Yeager, WFPA (con); John Kirner, Tacoma Public Utilities Water Department (con); Dawn Vyvyan, Skagit System Coop, Yakima Indian Nation (con); Kris Backes, AWB (con); Tom Fitzsimmons, Thurston County (pro); K.O. Rosenberg, NE Tri-Counties (pro); Kathleen Collins, Association of Washington Cities (con); Ray Shindler, Washington Association of Wheat Growers (con); Paul Parker, Washington State Association of Counties (pro); Dave Arbaugh, Washington PUD Association (con)