

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5814

AS OF FEBRUARY 25, 1993

Brief Description: Establishing a conservation permit program for users of state parks.

SPONSORS: Senators Winsley and Fraser

SENATE COMMITTEE ON ECOLOGY & PARKS

Staff: Cathy Baker (786-7708)

Hearing Dates: February 26, 1993

BACKGROUND:

Under existing law, the State Parks and Recreation Commission is authorized to charge fees for services, utilities, and use of facilities as the commission deems proper. The commission has used this authority to adopt, by rule, a variety of user fees. These fees include campsite fees, moorage fees, parking fees, boat launch fees, and others. The revenue generated from these fees is deposited into the state general fund.

The commission also administers a winter recreational program for which a fee was authorized directly by statute. Under the winter recreational program, the commission issues annual "sno-park permits."

In 1992, the Legislature created the State Wildlife and Recreation Lands Management Task Force and directed the task force to recommend new revenue sources that could be used to fund maintenance and operation needs of state-owned wildlife and recreation lands. The use of a "state lands recreational use permit fee" was among seven revenue options identified in the final report issued by the task force. The report indicates that extensive public relations efforts and active enforcement would be necessary to effectively implement a recreational use permit fee program.

Some other states have instituted annual permit programs for the use of state parks and other public lands. For instance, the state of Texas has a "conservation passport" program. The purchase of a Texas conservation passport provides access to a variety of state-owned lands and interpretive events, and makes the holder eligible for discounts on campsite fees.

SUMMARY:

The State Parks and Recreation Commission shall establish a conservation permit program to collect fees for recreational use of state park lands. The commission shall establish, by rule, the amount of the fee, but it shall not be less than \$25

per year. Receipts from the sale of conservation permits shall be deposited into the state general fund and shall be appropriated to the commission for acquiring, operating, and maintaining state park facilities.

The commission shall consider waivers or reductions in other fees that the commission has adopted by rule for persons who hold a valid conservation permit. Park passes for senior citizens, veterans, and other groups as specified by existing law, are not affected by the conservation permit program.

Civil penalties are established for park users who violate the conservation permit requirement, with some exceptions.

The conservation permit program is included within the recreational use immunity provisions relating to state parks.

Appropriation: none

Revenue: yes

Fiscal Note: requested February 16, 1993