

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6434

AS OF FEBRUARY 1, 1994

Brief Description: Controlling the water supply.

SPONSORS: Senators Skratek and Fraser

SENATE COMMITTEE ON ECOLOGY & PARKS

Staff: Cathy Baker (786-7708)

Hearing Dates: February 1, 1994

BACKGROUND:

The Growth Management Act (GMA), enacted in 1990 and expanded in 1991, requires most counties and cities in the state to adopt comprehensive land use plans which include the following elements: land use, transportation, housing, capital facilities, and utilities. The GMA requires all local governments in the state to identify and protect six types of "critical areas" as well as mineral, forest and agricultural lands.

Counties planning under GMA are required to designate urban growth areas within which urban growth is encouraged and outside of which urban growth can occur only if it is not urban in nature. Urban growth areas are to include cities as well as areas needed to accommodate a 20-year projected population increase as determined by the Office of Financial Management.

County-wide planning policies must be adopted by counties planning under GMA in cooperation with cities to ensure that city and county comprehensive plans are consistent. The policies must address the following: urban growth areas; provision of urban services, siting of state and public facilities; transportation; affordable housing; economic development; and fiscal impacts.

Under provisions in the GMA, applicants for a building permit are to provide evidence of an adequate water supply for the intended use of the building. Counties or cities may impose conditions on building permits requiring connection to an existing public water system where the system is willing and able to provide safe and reliable water to the applicant with reasonable economy and efficiency.

It is suggested that water availability should be a more important factor in planning for growth.

SUMMARY:

Additional findings are made in the Growth Management Act (GMA) that uncoordinated and unplanned growth is associated with demands on finite water supplies which can lead to shortfalls in our water uses. An additional goal is added to the GMA stating that growth within a watershed shall not adversely affect existing instream and out-of-stream water uses.

"Contingency water" is defined as supplemental fresh water that can be piped in from sources outside the county; is developed through research and development; or results from revisions to domestic water availability based on changes in population growth trends, or modifications to water rights and allocations.

A formula is provided for calculating "domestic water availability." Domestic water availability is the portion of a county's total water supply available for household use after: (1) deducting its existing state-certified water rights and allocations; (2) deducting its water requirements for both existing and planned industrial, commercial, and parks and recreational uses; (3) adding a factor based on the county's water conservation measures; and (4) adding 50 percent or more of its future contingency water supplies. Domestic water availability is determined by the Department of Ecology.

The Office of Financial Management is directed to utilize the following information when planning its 20-year population projections: (1) census data for the previous ten years trended for the next 20 years on a straight line basis; (2) designation of critical areas and open space corridors that are not to accept any further growth; and (3) designation of agricultural, forest and mineral lands that will accept limited population growth under the county's comprehensive plan.

In preparing the land use element for comprehensive land use plans required under the GMA, jurisdictions are to include information on known domestic water availability.

Counties are to consider known domestic water availability as a factor in establishing urban growth areas. Population projections calculated by the Office of Financial Management are deleted from the statute as a basis for establishing urban growth areas.

County-wide planning policies adopted under the GMA shall include policies for implementing the domestic water availability formula, as provided by the Department of Ecology.

Appropriation: none

Revenue: none

Fiscal Note: requested January 24, 1994

