

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2449

As Reported By House Committee On:
Agriculture & Ecology

Title: An act relating to water resource management.

Brief Description: Providing for water resource management.

Sponsors: Representatives Delvin, Foreman, Chandler, Mastin, Honeyford, Clements, Koster, Boldt, Schoesler, Robertson, Silver, Mulliken and Johnson.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Agriculture & Ecology: 1/29/96, 2/1/96 [DPS].

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & ECOLOGY

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 16 members: Representatives Chandler, Chairman; Koster, Vice Chairman; Chappell, Ranking Minority Member; Linville, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Boldt; Clements; Delvin; R. Fisher; Honeyford; Johnson; Murray; Ogden; Regala; Robertson; Rust and Schoesler.

Staff: Bill Lynch (786-7092).

Background: The right to use water for a beneficial purpose remains appurtenant to the land or place upon which it is used. The right to use this water may be transferred to another without loss of priority of right, with the approval of the Department of Ecology.

Summary of Substitute Bill: An eight-member Joint Select Committee on Water Transfers is created and is composed of two members from each political party caucus in both houses. A Senator and a member of the House are elected by the membership to serve as co-chairs. The committee will receive staff support from both the Senate and the House of Representatives.

The committee will study voluntary water transfers and make recommendations concerning incentives that the state should provide to encourage transfers: policies that would streamline transfers; principles that should apply to temporary and permanent transfers; protection of other water rights; presumptions; and impacts on

communities. The committee must report its recommendations in the form of proposed legislation by December 31, 1996.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The original bill authorized the creation of water conservancy boards to approve water transfers at the local level.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 29, 1996.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: (Original bill) The Department of Ecology takes too long to process transfers. Planning occurs at the local level, so it makes sense for transfers to occur at the local level. It will allow for more efficient use of water.

Testimony Against: (Original bill) Transfers can have significant impact on in-stream uses. Boards won't include people with in-stream use expertise. Not all waters of the state should be eligible.

Testified: Jerry Harper, Columbia Snake River Irrigators Association (in favor). Scott Merriman, Washington Environmental Council; and Bruce Wishart, Sierra Club (against).