

SENATE BILL REPORT

2SHB 1817

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Agriculture & Environment, March 26, 1997
Ways & Means, April 4, 1997

Title: An act relating to a reclaimed water demonstration program.

Brief Description: Authorizing reclaimed water demonstration projects.

Sponsors: House Committee on Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representatives Chandler, Kessler, Alexander, Linville, DeBolt, O'Brien, Skinner, Wolfe, McMorris, Ogden, D. Sommers, Hankins, Cooke and Mason).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Agriculture & Environment: 3/20/97, 3/26/97 [DPA-WM].
Ways & Means: 4/4/97 [DPA, DNPA].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & ENVIRONMENT

Majority Report: Do pass as amended and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.
Signed by Senators Morton, Chair; Swecker, Vice Chair; Fraser, McAuliffe, Newhouse, Oke and Rasmussen.

Staff: Kari Guy (786-7437)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Majority Report: Do pass as amended.
Signed by Senators West, Chair; Deccio, Vice Chair; Strannigan, Vice Chair; Fraser, Hochstatter, Long, McDonald, Rossi, Schow, Swecker and Winsley.

Minority Report: Do not pass as amended.
Signed by Senators Brown, Kohl, Loveland and Thibaudeau.

Staff: Cathy Baker (786-7708)

Background: The Legislature adopted legislation in 1995 to encourage the use of reclaimed water. Reclaimed water is effluent derived from sewage from a wastewater treatment system that has been treated so that it is suitable for beneficial use. Reclaimed water can be used in many instances instead of water that is otherwise suitable for drinking purposes.

The Department of Health and the Department of Ecology have developed standards for reclaimed water use. The standards address the water quality requirements for a number of intended uses. There is concern among some potential users of reclaimed water that the negative public perception of reclaimed water may cause economic losses for the user.

It has been suggested that state funding for local reclaimed water demonstration projects will allow the state to test the reclaimed water standards and refine reclaimed water technologies.

Summary of Amended Bill: The Department of Ecology is directed to establish and administer a reclaimed water demonstration program in cooperation with the Department of Health. The demonstration program consists of five demonstration projects.

The Department of Ecology must enter into a grant agreement with each of the demonstration project jurisdictions by September 30, 1997. The agreement must include reporting requirements, time-lines, and a fund disbursement schedule based upon agreed project milestones. The Department of Ecology must report to the appropriate legislative committees on the results of the program upon completion of the projects.

Pilot projects that discharge or deliver reclaimed water into federal reclamation facilities or irrigation district facilities must meet the requirements of the facilities' operating entity for such discharges or deliveries. No irrigation district is liable for any damages to persons or property arising from the demonstration projects.

The five reclaimed water demonstration projects are:

- (1) City of Ephrata will use class A reclaimed water for surface spreading to recharge the groundwater and reduce the nitrate concentrations that currently exceed drinking water standards in domestic wells;
- (2) Lincoln County will study using reclaimed water to transport 22 million gallons a day from Spokane to sources that will put water back into long depleted stream beds;
- (3) Royal City will replace an interim emergency spray field by using 100 percent of its discharge as class A reclaimed water to enhance local wetlands and lakes in the winter;
- (4) The city of Sequim will implement a tertiary treatment system and reuse 100 percent of its wastewater to reopen an existing shellfish closure area, improve stream flows into the Dungeness River, and provide a sustainable water supply for irrigation; and
- (5) The city of Yelm will use 100 percent of its wastewater to provide alternative water supply for irrigation and industrial use to offset increased demands for water, protect Nisqually River chum salmon runs, and develop experimental artificial wetlands to test low cost treatment options.

Agriculture & Environment Amended Bill Compared to Original Bill: The striking amendment deletes language related to the negative public perception of reclaimed water use.

Ways & Means Amended Bill Compared to Agriculture & Environment Amended Bill: Provisions making the bill null and void if funding is not provided in the budget bill are removed.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For (Agriculture & Environment): Water reuse and reclamation allows conservation of potable water. These projects will be valuable tests of the reclaimed water standards, and will provide benefits to the rest of the state. Small communities do not have the rate base to sustain these projects, but each of these communities has made significant contributions to the projects in terms of money, research, and volunteer time.

Testimony Against (Agriculture & Environment): Language added in the House related to the negative public perception of food crop irrigation is inappropriate in this bill and does damage to the stated legislative goal of encouraging water reuse.

Testified (Agriculture & Environment): Kathleen Collins, Reclaimed Water Demo. Project (pro); Bob Smith, City of Sequim (pro); Dianne Recknagel, City of Ephrata (pro); Kathy Wolf, City of Yelm (pro); Michael Kouen, City of Royal City (pro); Dave Clark, Linda Crerar, DOH/DOE (pro w/concerns); Hunter Horvath, NPE (pro); Mike Grady, CTED (pro); Eric Bergman, WA State Association of Counties (pro).

Testimony For (Ways & Means): These projects will help demonstrate environmentally-sensitive ways to re-use wastewater.

Testimony Against (Ways & Means): None.

Testified (Ways & Means): Representative Gary Alexander (pro).