

FINAL BILL REPORT

SSB 5505

C 443 L 97

Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Directing agencies to assist growing communities in securing safe and reliable water sources.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Agriculture & Environment (originally sponsored by Senators Morton, Rasmussen and Swecker).

Senate Committee on Agriculture & Environment

Senate Committee on Ways & Means

House Committee on Agriculture & Ecology

House Committee on Appropriations

Background: The Growth Management Act (GMA) requires certain counties, and the cities within those counties, to conduct comprehensive planning for future growth. With input from cities located within its boundaries, each county planning under GMA must adopt countywide planning policies guiding the development of the comprehensive plans. Counties also must adopt urban growth areas in which the urban growth projected for the next 20 years is to be located. The growth projections are made by the state Office of Financial Management based on demographic information.

Withdrawal of surface or ground waters requires a water right issued by the Department of Ecology. When an application is received, the Department of Ecology will investigate the application, the amount of water available for appropriation by the applicant, and the beneficial uses to which that water can be applied. If the department finds that water is not available for appropriation, or the proposed appropriation would impair existing rights or be detrimental to the public welfare, the water right will be denied.

In 1996 a number of water right applications were denied by the Department of Ecology, including some permits for public water supply systems. It has been suggested that applicants who have been denied a water right will need assistance in locating and developing sources of water to accommodate projected growth.

Summary: The Department of Ecology must provide assistance upon request to an applicant for a water right in obtaining an adequate supply of water. The supply of water must be consistent with the local land use plan and the population forecast made by the Office of Financial Management for the area. For public water supply systems, the supply sought must be consistent with any applicable watershed and water system plans, as well as the population forecast.

Votes on Final Passage:

Senate	49	0	
House	91	0	(House amended)
Senate	43	0	(Senate concurred)

Effective: July 27, 1997