

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5620

As Passed Senate, March 12, 1997

Title: An act relating to aquifer protection areas.

Brief Description: Granting additional authority to aquifer protection areas.

Sponsors: Senators Haugen and McCaslin.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Government Operations: 2/21/97, 3/4/97 [DP].
Passed Senate, 3/12/97, 46-0.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators McCaslin, Chair; Hale, Vice Chair; Haugen, Horn, Patterson and Swanson.

Staff: Diane Smith (786-7410)

Background: An aquifer protection area is allowed by statute to be formed as part of a county's government. The creation occurs subsequent to approval by a simple majority vote of the residents of the proposed aquifer protection area.

The purpose of the aquifer protection area is to fund the protection, preservation and rehabilitation of subterranean waters. Funding is accomplished by the imposition of fees on withdrawal of underground water and on-site sewage disposal. The amount and use of the fees must be authorized by a simple majority vote of the area.

The fees may be used for planning, construction of facilities, monitoring, enforcement and education.

Only one aquifer protection area exists in the state. It is in Spokane County.

Summary of Bill: The county legislative authority is given the option of creating a directly elected board of commissioners for an aquifer protection area. The aquifer protection area may incur general indebtedness payable from annual tax levies, if approved by 3/5 of the voters. The proceeds from the bond issuance must be used for construction of improvements as described in the area's general comprehensive plan.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: The citizens in the central Whidbey area want a directly elected board to manage the money collected by the aquifer protection area. This is necessary for the people to agree to an increase in the fees they must pay.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Donald H. Lee, Central Whidbey Water Resources Forum (pro).