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HOUSE BILL 1824

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State of Washington                      55th Legislature                      1997 Regular Session

By Representatives Buck, Hatfield and Kessler

Read first time 02/10/97. Referred to Committee on Natural Resources.

1            AN ACT Relating to natural area preserves and natural resources  
2 conservation areas; adding a new section to chapter 79.70 RCW; creating  
3 new sections; and declaring an emergency.

4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

5            NEW SECTION.    **Sec. 1.** The legislature finds that it is necessary  
6 to review its policy of establishing a series of natural area preserves  
7 and natural resources conservation areas as well as the implementation  
8 of chapters 79.70 and 79.71 RCW by the department of natural resources  
9 and the natural heritage advisory council. Because of the current  
10 level of concern about the natural area preserve and natural resources  
11 conservation area programs, it shall be the policy of the state of  
12 Washington to cease to acquire lands for natural area preserves and  
13 natural resources conservation areas at least until the legislature has  
14 completed this needed review. The department of natural resources  
15 shall not acquire any natural area preserves or natural resources  
16 conservation areas nor shall the department of natural resources  
17 otherwise designate any natural area preserves or natural resources  
18 conservation areas or transfer lands into natural area preserve or

1 natural resources conservation area status unless and until  
2 specifically directed to do so by the legislature.

3 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** (1) There is established a joint select  
4 committee on natural area preserves and natural resources conservation  
5 areas. The committee shall be comprised of two members of the senate,  
6 one from each caucus, to be selected by the president of the senate,  
7 and two members of the house of representatives, one from each caucus,  
8 to be selected by the speaker of the house. Committee members shall  
9 select from among themselves a committee chair and vice-chair.

10 (2) The joint select committee shall conduct a comprehensive review  
11 of the natural area preserve and natural resources conservation area  
12 programs. The committee's review shall include but not be limited to  
13 the following elements:

14 (a) A review of the current statutes in chapters 79.70 and 79.71  
15 RCW and of the original intent of the legislation creating those  
16 chapters;

17 (b) A review of the existing rules formulated under chapters 79.70  
18 and 79.71 RCW and an analysis of the extent to which the rules properly  
19 comply with the original legislative intent;

20 (c) An evaluation of what the programs established by chapters  
21 79.70 and 79.71 RCW have accomplished and whether these accomplishments  
22 are consistent with the original intent of the legislation;

23 (d) Identification of opportunities to provide better public notice  
24 regarding any future natural area preserves and natural resources  
25 conservation areas, including notice of when an area is being  
26 considered for designation as a natural area preserve or natural  
27 resources conservation area, notice of when the department of natural  
28 resources is considering acquiring land for a preserve or conservation  
29 area, and notice and solicitation of public input when the department  
30 of natural resources is developing a management plan for a preserve or  
31 conservation area;

32 (e) An evaluation of how a natural area preserve or natural  
33 resources conservation area designation has interfered with or  
34 otherwise impacted neighboring property owners;

35 (f) An evaluation of whether to expand public activities such as  
36 hunting and fishing within some or all natural area preserves and  
37 natural resources conservation areas and a recommendation on how such  
38 an expansion might be accomplished; and

1 (g) Other study elements identified by the committee.

2 (3) Staffing for the committee shall be from senate committee  
3 services and house of representatives office of program research.

4 (4) The committee shall report its findings and recommendations to  
5 the legislature by December 1, 1997.

6 (5) The committee expires April 1, 1998.

7 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** A new section is added to chapter 79.70 RCW  
8 to read as follows:

9 (1) Traditional public uses of areas designated as natural area  
10 preserves may be compatible with an area's designation as a preserve.  
11 As part of its overall evaluation of the natural area preserve program,  
12 the legislature intends to test this hypothesis on one of the larger  
13 natural area preserves.

14 (2) The Elk river natural area preserve shall be open to  
15 traditional public uses such as hunting, fishing, and hiking. When  
16 regulating hunting and fishing in the area, the fish and wildlife  
17 commission shall take into account the reasons for the area's  
18 designation as a natural area preserve.

19 (3) The department and the fish and wildlife commission shall work  
20 in conjunction with interested citizens of Grays Harbor county to  
21 assess the impacts of these traditional public uses on the preserve and  
22 its natural heritage resources. The department shall encourage local  
23 volunteers to participate in activities that enhance the natural  
24 heritage resource value of the Elk river preserve such as litter  
25 prevention and pick-up, and habitat protection and restoration efforts.  
26 The department, the fish and wildlife commission, and the citizen  
27 participants shall report to the legislature on the results of their  
28 efforts every two years, with the first report due December 1, 1998.

29 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** This act is necessary for the immediate  
30 preservation of the public peace, health, or safety, or support of the  
31 state government and its existing public institutions, and takes effect  
32 immediately.

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