

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2997

As Reported By House Committee On:
Agriculture & Ecology

Title: An act relating to delegation of authority for water well tagging, sealing, and decommissioning.

Brief Description: Permanently authorizing well delegation.

Sponsors: Representatives Linville and G. Chandler.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Agriculture & Ecology: 2/2/00, 2/4/00 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Removes the termination date for the Department of Ecology to delegate authority for well tagging, sealing, and decommissioning.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & ECOLOGY

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 14 members: Representatives G. Chandler, Republican Co-Chair; Linville, Democratic Co-Chair; Cooper, Democratic Vice Chair; Koster, Republican Vice Chair; Anderson; B. Chandler; Delvin; Fortunato; Grant; Reardon; Schoesler; Stensen; Sump and Wood.

Staff: Bill Lynch (786-7092).

Background:

In 1992, legislation was enacted to allow the Department of Ecology to delegate to a health district or county upon request, the authority to administer and enforce the well sealing and decommissioning portions of the water well construction program. Well tagging was expressly added to these delegable authorities in 1993. The statute which allowed the delegation of this authority was originally set to expire in 1996, but was extended for an additional four years.

The authority for the Department of Ecology to delegate the administration and enforcement of tagging, sealing, and decommissioning portions of the water well construction program expires on June 30, 2000, unless extended by the Legislature.

Summary of Bill:

The Department of Ecology may delegate, on a permanent basis to a health district or county, the authority for administering and enforcing the tagging, sealing, and decommissioning portions of the water well construction program.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.

Testimony For: The delegation of this authority works well. Fifteen counties currently exercise delegated authority. Compliance is increased, and many more wells are inspected because there are only four inspectors who are employed by the Department of Ecology to cover the entire state. Having a local inspector makes it easier to coordinate the well-drilling permit with other permits. The department trains the local inspectors before delegating responsibility, so it is a benefit to the county.

Testimony Against: The law should be amended so that the Department of Ecology doesn't use this process to enforce water laws.

Testified: (In support with concerns) Mike Matson, Washington State Drilling and Groundwater Association.

(In support) Ken Slattery, Department of Ecology; John Wolders, Washington State Environmental Health Directors; and Art Starry, Thurston County Environmental Health.