

# ***ANALYSIS OF HB 1826***

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***House Agriculture & Ecology Committee  
15, 1999***

***February***

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<p>- Requires DOE to appoint a water master to a watershed once a watershed plan has been adopted if the appointment is required in the plan.</p>
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**BACKGROUND:**

The water code allows the Department of Ecology (DOE) to appoint water masters for any areas, called districts,— of the state and for such duration as the DOE finds appropriate. A water master is supervised and employed by the DOE. A water master regulates and controls the use of water within the district by regulating headgates, conduits, and reservoirs to prevent the use of water in excess of the amount to which the owner of the water right is entitled. A water master must also enforce such rules as DOE from time to time prescribes. Water masters are to be deputized by the counties or counties in their districts and have the power to arrest violators.

Legislation enacted in 1998 authorizes the development of watershed management plans by local planning units. Such a plan may not contain elements that create obligations for tribal, county, or state government unless each government to be obligated has at least one member on the planning unit and the members representing these governments agree to the obligations. Among the obligations expressly governed by this policy are actions imposing a fiscal impact or requiring a redeployment of resources.

**SUMMARY:**

The DOE must appoint a water master to each watershed management area for which a plan has been adopted by a planning unit and counties under watershed planning legislation enacted in 1998 if the plan requests or requires the appointment.