

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## SSB 6474

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### As Reported by House Committee On:

Natural Resources

**Title:** An act relating to purchase of land by state agencies.

**Brief Description:** Reviewing certain state agency land purchases.

**Sponsors:** Senate Committee on Natural Resources, Parks & Shorelines (originally sponsored by Senators Morton, Hargrove, Hewitt, Honeyford, T. Sheldon, Hochstatter, Benton, Stevens, McCaslin, Long, Hale and Sheahan).

### Brief History:

#### Committee Activity:

Natural Resources: 2/26/02, 2/27/02 [DP].

#### Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Directs the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee to conduct a review of state land purchasing practices.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

**Majority Report:** Do pass. Signed by 8 members: Representatives Doumit, Chair; Sump, Ranking Minority Member; Buck, Eickmeyer, Jackley, Orcutt, Pearson and Upthegrove.

**Minority Report:** Do not pass. Signed by 3 members: Representatives Rockefeller, Vice Chair; Ericksen and McDermott.

**Staff:** Jason Callahan (786-7117).

### Background:

In 1997 the Legislature directed the Interagency Committee for Outdoor Recreation (IAC) to develop a statewide inventory of the amount, specific ownership, general location, and principal use of lands owned by federal, state, local, and tribal governments. In 1999 the IAC completed an inventory of publicly-owned lands in each county of the state.

According to that report, the six counties with the highest proportion of publicly-owned

acres are Chelan, Jefferson, Pend Oreille, Skagit, Skamania, and Whatcom. The counties with the highest proportion of tribal land are Yakima, Ferry, Grays Harbor, and Okanogan.

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**Summary of Substitute Bill:**

The Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee must conduct, by December 1, 2003, a review of state agency land purchases for wildlife habitat and related purposes for the past five years in the six counties with the highest proportion of public land ownership. The review must include an assessment of:

- The cumulative effect of land purchases on local government property tax revenues.
  - The process used to select properties.
  - The method used for appraising properties.
  - The difference between the appraised value and the final purchase price.
  - Whether land purchases have had an impact on the property value of nearby land.
  - The maintenance and management of state lands, specifically in regard to weed management.
  - The effects on the local economy from the changes in use of property purchased by the state.
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**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

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

**Testimony For:** The impact of state land purchases and the resulting tax revenue decrease on counties need to be analyzed. The cumulative effects of multiple state purchases are measurable, and changes of land management on properties purchased by the state effect neighboring properties. The original bill was different in form, but has been negotiated to its current form.

The study can be completed with no impact to the current biennium's budget, and some work already completed by the IAC can be used to expedite the process.

**Testimony Against:** The decisions to purchase wildlife habitat should be made based on the needs of wildlife populations, not the percentage of land in a county that the state already owns. An accurate study would require the participation of entities outside of the scope of this bill. Not all wildlife-related land purchases occur in rural areas. Changes in property valuation in urban settings will be impossible to pin to specific state purchasing decisions.

**Testified:** (In support) Senator Morton, prime sponsor; and Jim Zimmerman, Washington Cattlemen's Association.

(Opposed) Mike Ryherd, Washington Wildlife and Recreation Coalition.

(Neutral) Tom Sykes, Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee.