

Agriculture & Ecology Committee

SSB 5586

Brief Description: *Modifying provisions concerning how water resource inventory areas receive funds to conduct planning.*

Sponsors: *By Senate Committee on Environment, Energy & Water (originally sponsored by Senators Fraser, Morton and Regala; by request of Department of Ecology).*

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- *Allows local watershed planning groups to receive additional funding from the Department of Ecology (DOE) for their planning if it includes instream flow, water quality, or fish habitat components.*
- *Allows a more flexible schedule of funding from the DOE for such a group under certain circumstances.*
- *Alters the deadline for completing a watershed plan.*

Hearing Date: *3/29/01*

Staff: *Kenneth Hirst (786-7105).*

Background:

Planning Elements. *Watershed planning laws enacted in 1997 and 1998 establish procedures and policies for initiating watershed planning at the local level. If certain local governments choose to initiate the planning for one or more watersheds they appoint a planning unit to do the planning. The watersheds are referred to as water resource inventory areas (WRIA's). (RCW 90.82.060.) The planning unit must address water quantity issues in the WRIA's by conducting an assessment of water supply and use in the watershed and developing strategies for future use. (RCW 90.82.070.) The initiating governments may choose to add other components to the watershed planning process as well. These may include any combination of the following: an instream flow component, a water quality component, and a fish habitat component. (RCW 90.82.080 - .100.)*

Planning Grants. Upon application, the DOE may provide funding assistance for conducting the watershed planning. A planning unit is eligible to receive watershed planning grants for three phases of planning. The maximum of amount of money that may be granted for a planning unit for each phase and the authorized uses of the monies in each phase are specified by statute:

- *Phase I (for organizing): Up to \$50,000 for one WRIA or up to \$75,000 for multiple WRIA's.*
- *Phase II (for watershed assessments): Up to \$200,000/WRIA; and*
- *Phase III (for developing a watershed plan and recommending actions): Up to \$250,000/WRIA.*

The use of Phase III grant monies for recommending actions is for making recommendations for actions by local, state, and federal agencies, tribes, private property owners, private organizations, and individual citizens, including a recommended list of strategies and projects that would further the purpose of the plan. (RCW 90.82.040.)

The deadline for completing a watershed plan is 4 years from the date funding is first received by a planning unit.

Summary of Bill:

For Phase II planning, a planning unit whose initiating governments choose to include an instream flow, water quality, or habitat component in the planning may apply for additional funds to conduct assessments directly related to that component. They may apply for up to \$100,000 for each component added..

A planning unit may also request a different amount of funding than the amounts specified by statute for Phase II and Phase III. However, the total amount of funds awarded by the DOE to the planning unit cannot exceed the total of the amounts specified by statute for all three phases of planning. The DOE cannot approve such an alternative for the allocation of funds unless the planning unit demonstrates that the alternative will not impair the unit's ability to complete its plan.

The deadline for completing a watershed plan is now 4 years from the date funds beyond initial funding are first drawn upon by the planning unit.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on March 21, 2001.

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