

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1973

As Reported by House Committee On:
Trade & Economic Development

Title: An act relating to promoting tourism.

Brief Description: Promoting tourism.

Sponsors: Representatives Veloria, McCoy and Kenney.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Trade & Economic Development: 2/28/03, 3/4/03 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Directs the Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development, working with the Department of Fish and Wildlife and other appropriate entities, to develop an annual business and marketing plan to promote nature-based tourism in Washington.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRADE & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 11 members: Representatives Veloria, Chair; Eickmeyer, Vice Chair; Skinner, Ranking Minority Member; McDonald, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Blake, Chase, Condotta, Kristiansen, McCoy, Pettigrew and Priest.

Staff: Tracey Taylor (786-7196).

Background:

Washington is 68,139 square miles of diverse geography, geology, and climate. The west side of the state has ancient rain forests, miles of Pacific Ocean coastline, some of the state's largest cities and the Space Needle. The east side of the state is traditionally dry and sunny, with a big sky, wide open spaces, farms and ranches. There are also spectacular canyons, gorges and the Grand Coulee Dam. The state is divided by the majestic Cascade mountains. All in all, Washington offers many opportunities for tourists of all interests.

In 2000 over 25.9 million visitors enjoyed Washington parks. There are also thousands of licensed elk and deer hunters that take advantage of the outdoors. Sport fishermen and sport shellfishers enjoy the salmon, steelhead, and razor clams found in Washington. Wildlife viewing is an increasing industry that generates annually \$1.7 billion and supports 21,000 jobs in this state. In fact, wildlife viewing is the fastest growing outdoor activity and segment of the travel industry. This activity thrives in the rural areas and the opportunities for wildlife viewing primarily occurs on public lands.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

The Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development is directed to develop, in conjunction with the Department of Fish and Wildlife and other appropriate agencies and organizations, an annual business and marketing plan to promote nature-based tourism in Washington. This includes the coordination of the promotion of nature-based tourism; the promotion of hunting, fishing and wildlife viewing; the creation of partnerships among agencies, organizations, tribes and local communities; the provision of educational materials to minority and local communities about the rules, regulations and recreational opportunities; and the promotion of local industries.

The State Wildlife Fund is expanded to include expenditures for the promotion of nature-based tourism in Washington.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The substitute amends the State Wildlife Fund to allow moneys to be used for the promotion of nature-based tourism. Thus, the appropriation will be made from the State Wildlife Fund, not the State General Fund.

Appropriation: The sum of \$75,000 is appropriated from the State Wildlife Fund for Fiscal Year 2003-04 and the sum of \$75,000 is appropriated from the State Wildlife Fund for Fiscal Year 2004-05.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 24, 2003.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: There are many great opportunities for recreational and family activities here in Washington. Some local areas are involved in marketing such tourism possibilities; however, there is no state-wide focus on nature-based activities. There are great things we can do with our state and natural resources agencies to showcase Washington, especially with the upcoming celebration of the Lewis & Clark Expedition.

Nature-based tourism is growing domestically, but it is already huge in Europe. We need to spread the word about Washington's diverse climate and the possibilities observe wide variety of animals and plants to attract both domestic and international visitors.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Becky Bogard, Washington Association of Convention & Visitors Bureaus; Jim King, Citizens for Parks and Recreation; and Steve Rodrigues, Columbia Gardens.