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**Agriculture & Natural Resources  
Committee**

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**SSB 6575**

**Brief Description:** Concerning use classifications for irrigation district conveyance and drainage facilities.

**Sponsors:** Senate Committee on Natural Resources, Energy & Water (originally sponsored by Senators Honeyford and Sheahan).

**Brief Summary of Substitute Bill**

- Requires the Department of Ecology (DOE) to conduct a use attainability analysis of water bodies within a federal reclamation project under certain circumstances.
- Requires the DOE to adopt rules designating uses for water bodies within federal reclamation project boundaries.

**Hearing Date:** 2/18/04

**Staff:** Caroleen Dineen (786-7156).

**Background:**

The federal Clean Water Act (CWA) sets a national goal to restore and maintain the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the nation's waters and to eliminate pollutant discharges into navigable waters. The CWA sets effluent limitations for discharges of pollutants to navigable waters. The Washington Department of Ecology (DOE) is delegated federal CWA authority by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and is the agency authorized to implement state water quality programs.

The CWA requires states to adopt standards to protect fish and other aquatic life and to protect humans using water for recreation, drinking water, and fish. These water quality standards are rules specifying the desired water quality to be achieved or maintained and protecting existing water quality from degradation. Washington's water quality standards consist of:

- designated uses, or desired uses of the water specific to each water body;
- criteria necessary to protect designated uses (may be numeric or narrative limits); and
- the Antidegradation Policy, establishing procedures to follow when considering regulating an activity that might affect a particular water body.

An irrigation district may be created to provide a system of water distribution for irrigation purposes. In addition, an irrigation district has authority to operate a domestic water system for irrigated land owners and operate a drainage or sewage system.

The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) manages numerous reclamation projects throughout the Pacific Northwest. Two of these are in eastern Washington. The Columbia Basin project currently includes more than 600,000 irrigated acres. The Yakima project includes six reservoirs that catch and hold more than a million acre-feet of spring runoff in the Cascade Mountains.

**Summary of Bill:**

At the request of the BOR or of federal reclamation project irrigation districts, the DOE must (as resources allow) conduct a use attainability analysis of water bodies located within federal reclamation project boundaries. The DOE also must adopt rules designating uses for water bodies within federal reclamation project boundaries. The DOE rules must support beneficial uses and must:

- be consistent with the primary authorized project purposes of constructed storage and conveyance facilities and other water transport systems;
- recognize the unique site-specific characteristics of the arid and semiarid regions in which federal reclamation projects are located;
- recognize the need to deliver project irrigation water; and
- recognize the need to construct, operate, and maintain project facilities.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on February 18, 2004.

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