

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## ESHB 2275

---

---

As Reported By Senate Committee On:  
Parks, Fish & Wildlife, February 24, 2004  
Ways & Means, March 1, 2004

**Title:** An act relating to expanding the criteria for habitat conservation programs.

**Brief Description:** Expanding the criteria for habitat conservation programs.

**Sponsors:** House Committee on Capital Budget (originally sponsored by Representatives Mastin and Dunshee).

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Parks, Fish & Wildlife: 2/23/04, 2/24/04 [DPA-WM].  
Ways & Means: 3/1/04 [DPA, DNPA].

---

### SENATE COMMITTEE ON PARKS, FISH & WILDLIFE

**Majority Report:** Do pass as amended and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.  
Signed by Senators Oke, Chair; Sheahan, Vice Chair; Doumit, Morton and Swecker.

**Staff:** Kari Guy (786-7437)

---

### SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

**Majority Report:** Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators Zarelli, Chair; Hewitt, Vice Chair; Parlette, Vice Chair; Doumit, Honeyford, Johnson, Pflug, Rasmussen, Sheahan and Winsley.

**Minority Report:** Do not pass as amended.

Signed by Senator Fairley.

**Staff:** Brian Sims (786-7431)

**Background:** The Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program (WWRP) provides funds for the acquisition and development of outdoor recreation and habitat conservation areas. Counties, cities, ports, park and recreation districts, school districts, state agencies, and tribes are eligible to apply. Grant applications are evaluated annually and the Interagency Committee for Outdoor Recreation submits a list of prioritized projects to the Governor and Legislature for approval.

Half the funds appropriated in a biennium for the WWRP are deposited in the habitat conservation account, and are allocated according to a statutory formula for critical habitat, natural areas, and urban wildlife habitat. The other half of the funds are deposited in the outdoor recreation account, allocated by formulas established in statute for state parks, local parks, trails and water access sites. A portion of each account is left unallocated.

**Summary of Amended Bill:** Within the outdoor recreation account, the statutory allocations for state parks, local parks, trails, and water access sites are increased, with a smaller percentage left unallocated. Within the habitat conservation account, a new category for recreation and stewardship projects by state agencies replaces the percentage left unallocated. Acquisition projects funded with either habitat conservation or outdoor recreation funds may not result in a net loss of private land within any county.

Criteria are added to the acquisition priorities for the habitat conservation account and outdoor recreation account. The IAC must consider projects that are part of a local shoreline plan, watershed plan, comprehensive plan, or other prioritization effort.

The Department of Natural Resources must make a payment in lieu of taxes and another amount for control of noxious weeds for all natural areas. The State Treasurer must pay the counties directly. The counties must distribute the payment in lieu of taxes to appropriate junior taxing districts and school districts.

The Interagency Committee for Outdoor Recreation may retain up to 3 percent of WWRP funds for program administration.

**Ways & Means Amended Bill Compared to Parks, Fish & Wildlife Amended Bill:** The Ways & Means amendment allocates 15 percent to state stewardship projects.

**Parks, Fish & Wildlife Amended Bill Compared to Substitute Bill:** The farmland preservation and riparian protection programs are removed. Funds in the Habitat Conservation Account that are currently unallocated are allocated for recreation and stewardship projects by state agencies. Acquisition projects funded with either habitat conservation or outdoor recreation funds may not result in a net loss of private land within any county.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Effective Date:** The bill takes effect on July 1, 2005.

**Testimony For:** This bill recognizes the emerging issues of farmland preservation and riparian protection, and incorporates those issues into the WWRP program. The bill doesn't provide for additional state spending, it just changes how new WWRP appropriations would be spent. Local governments strongly support the payment in lieu of taxes for DNR natural areas. This could provide an opportunity to extend conservation reserve enhancement program leases.

**Testimony Against:** Acquiring farmlands and riparian areas will exacerbate the problems of housing affordability. The intention of preserving farmland is good, but the need is to preserve economically viable agriculture. The state should not separate the land and its economic potential from the farmer, either through outright purchase or a permanent easement.

**Testified:** Michelle Hagen, WA State Assn. of County Assessors (pro); Ric Abbett, Trout Unlimited (pro); Mike Ryherd, WWRC (pro); Kirk Thompson, WWRC (pro); Andy Cook, BIAW (con); Paul Parker, WA State Assn. of Counties (pro); Pene Speaks, Dept. of Natural

Resources (pro); Dan Wood, Farm Bureau (con); Tom Davis, WDFW (pro); Bill Robinson, The Water Conservancy (pro); Jim Jesernig, WA Assn of Conservation Districts (pro).