

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 6625

As Reported by House Committee On:
Natural Resources, Ecology & Parks

Title: An act relating to public lands management.

Brief Description: Concerning the management of public lands.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Natural Resources, Ocean & Recreation (originally sponsored by Senators Parlette and Fraser).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Natural Resources, Ecology & Parks: 2/21/06 [DP].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Establishes the Habitat and Recreation Lands Coordinating Group (Coordinating Group), with representatives from the Interagency Committee for Outdoor Recreation, the State Parks and Recreation Commission, the Department of Natural Resources, and the Department of Fish and Wildlife.
- Directs the Coordinating Group to develop recommendations and procedures for the statewide coordination of habitat and recreation land acquisitions.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES, ECOLOGY & PARKS

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 10 members: Representatives B. Sullivan, Chair; Upthegrove, Vice Chair; Buck, Ranking Minority Member; Kretz, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Blake, Chandler, Dickerson, Hunt, Kagi and Orcutt.

Staff: Jeff Olsen (786-7157).

Background:

The Legislature enacted Chapter 263, Laws of 2004 (SSB 6242), directing the Interagency Committee for Outdoor Recreation (IAC) to report to the Legislature and the Governor by June 30, 2005, regarding public acquisition of habitat and recreational lands. In June 2005, the IAC submitted the final report titled *Toward a Coordination Strategy for Habitat and Recreation Land Acquisitions in Washington State*. The report includes recommendations for improving coordination, communication, and documentation of habitat and recreation land

acquisition. One requirement of the report directed the IAC to include recommendations for a statewide strategy for coordinating habitat and recreation acquisitions by state agencies.

Summary of Bill:

The Habitat and Recreation Lands Coordinating Group (Coordinating Group) is established with representatives from the IAC, the State Parks and Recreation Commission, the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), and the Department of Fish and Wildlife. In addition, representatives from appropriate stakeholder organizations and local governments must be considered for participation in the Coordinating Group.

The Coordinating Group must develop recommendations and procedures for the statewide coordination of habitat and recreation land acquisitions. The recommendations must include language to amend agency land acquisition, management, and disposal plans to help provide statewide coordination. In addition, the Coordinating Group must develop standards for producing an interagency biennial forecast of habitat and recreation land acquisitions and disposals.

The Coordinating Group must also develop a recommended standard for interagency Geographic Information System (GIS) documentation of habitat and recreation lands, standardize recordkeeping, and identify a preferred process for centralizing acquisition data.

The IAC must review the planning requirements in the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program to determine if coordination of habitat and recreation land acquisition and disposal could be improved. The IAC must also develop options for centralizing coordination of habitat and recreation land acquisitions made with federal grants.

The Coordinating Group must provide yearly progress reports to the Office of Financial Management or the Director of the IAC.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 20, 2006.

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

Testimony For: (In support) These recommendations are a follow-up to the 2004 public land acquisition report issued by the IAC. Six counties in the state have less than 30 percent of their lands in private ownership, and the state needs to do a better job of coordinating land acquisition. State natural resource agencies support the bill and will work to improve coordination of their habitat and land acquisitions.

(With concerns) The DNR is concerned about the requirement to review existing and proposed habitat conservation plans on a regular basis to achieve uniformity and save costs. These plans

are long-term contracts with the federal government under the Federal Endangered Species Act, and the terms are not subject to change to achieve uniformity or save costs.

Testimony Against: None.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Senator Parlette, prime sponsor; Mark Quinn, Department of Fish and Wildlife; Jack Field, Washington Cattlemen's Association; and Jim Fox, Interagency Committee for Outdoor Recreation.

(With concerns) Bonnie Bunning, Department of Natural Resources.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.