

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 1413

As of March 11, 2005

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 Dunshee, Jarrett, Hunt, Nixon, Linville, Anderson, Sells, Tom, Appleton, Eickmeyer, B. Sullivan, Ericks, Chase, Lantz, Flannigan, Green, Ormsby, Upthegrove, Blake, O'Brien, Priest, Morrell, Clibborn, Kagi, Williams, Moeller, McCoy, Miloscia, Campbell and Simpson).

Brief History: Passed House: 3/09/05, 63-33.

Committee Activity: Natural Resources, Ocean & Recreation:

SENATE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES, OCEAN & RECREATION

Staff: Curt Gavigan (786-7437)

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 of the funds appropriated in a biennium for the WWRP are for habitat conservation, and are allocated according to a statutory formula for critical habitat, natural areas, and urban wildlife habitat. The other half of the funds are appropriated for outdoor recreation, 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 Bill: Two new funds are created for administration by the Interagency Committee for Outdoor Recreation (Committee). The riparian protection account is created to distribute funds for the acquisition and enhancement or restoration of riparian habitat. Riparian habitat is defined as land adjacent to water bodies, as well as submerged land and stream beds, which can provide habitat for fish and wildlife species. The farmlands preservation account is created and funds must be used for the acquisition of farmlands, and for enhancement or restoration of their ecological functions.

Appropriations for a biennium of up to forty million dollars or less are split equally between the habitat conservation account and the outdoor recreation account. The riparian protection account and farmlands preservation account receive a portion of any appropriations to the WWRP exceeding forty million dollars.

Within the habitat conservation account, allocations to the existing categories are increased and a new category is created for restoration and enhancement projects by state agencies, leaving no unallocated funds. Within the outdoor recreation account, allocations to the existing categories are also increased and a new category is created for development and renovation projects on state lands, leaving no unallocated funds. Criteria for grants for habitat conservation and outdoor recreation are revised to include such considerations as consistency with land use, shoreline, watershed, and recovery plans, inclusion of noxious weed control management plans, and the statewide significance of critical habitat projects.

The Committee may retain up to 3 percent of WWRP funds for administration. The Committee may accept private donations to the WWRP accounts. Project lists are prepared and submitted to the Governor in even numbered years.

Lands acquired by the Department of Natural Resources and the Department of Fish and Wildlife using funds from the habitat conservation account are subject to payments in lieu of property taxes and for weed control. Lands acquired by state agencies using funds from the riparian protection account are also subject to payments in lieu of property taxes and for weed control.

State or local agencies must consult with the appropriate county or city legislative authority before applying for funding to acquire property in counties having more than 70 percent of the total area of the county in public, federal, or tribal ownership.

Habitat and recreation lands acquired using WWRP grant funds may not be converted to a use other than that for which funds were originally approved without the approval of the Committee.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Portions of the bill take effect July 1, 2005, and other portions take effect July 1, 2007.