

SENATE BILL REPORT

ESSB 5385

As Passed Senate, February 9, 2006

Title: An act relating to creating an invasive species council.

Brief Description: Creating the Washington invasive species council.

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

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Natural Resources, Ocean & Recreation: 2/3/05, 2/24/05 [DPS].
Ways & Means: 3/4/05, 3/7/05 [DPS(NROR)].
Passed Senate: 3/15/05, 38-8; 2/9/06, 34-8.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES, OCEAN & RECREATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5385 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Jacobsen, Chair; Doumit, Vice Chair; Oke, Ranking Minority Member; Fraser, Hargrove, Morton, Spanel and Swecker.

Staff: Curt Gavigan (786-7437)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5385 as recommended by Committee on Natural Resources, Ocean & Recreation be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Prentice, Chair; Doumit, Vice Chair; Fraser, Vice Chair; Zarelli, Ranking Minority Member; Brandland, Kohl-Welles, Parlette, Pflug, Pridemore, Rasmussen, Roach, Rockefeller, Schoesler and Thibaudeau.

Staff: Kirstan Arestad (786-7708)

Background: Invasive species are defined by state statute as a "plant species or a nonnative animal species that either: (a) Causes or may cause displacement of, or otherwise threatens, native species in their natural communities; (b) Threatens or may threaten natural resources or their use in the state; (c) Causes or may cause economic damage to commercial or recreational activities that are dependent upon state waters; or (d) Threatens or harms human health."

Invasive species pose a serious threat to Washington State. This threat has increased with improvements in travel technology and increased travel in recent years. Once nonnative species become established in a new environment, the conditions that kept their population in check in their native environment may be missing.

Spartina, a cordgrass which has infested at least ten counties and limits the food available to shorebirds and fish, is an example of an invasive species that has impacted the state. Additional examples include purple loosestrife, milfoil, scot's broom, knapweeds, and cheat grass.

Summary of Bill: The Washington Invasive Species Council is created in the Interagency for Outdoor Recreation (IAC) to provide policy direction, planning, and coordination for combating and preventing harmful invasive species in the state. The Council is scheduled to exist until December 31, 2011. The membership of the Council includes representatives from six state entities and two counties. Representatives from four federal agencies must be invited to participate in a nonvoting capacity. The Council may expand its membership and may establish advisory and technical committees.

The Council must develop and periodically update a statewide strategic plan for addressing invasive species issues, including agency coordination and the prevention, detection, and response to invasive species. The Council must also report its activities annually to the Governor and the Legislature.

A non-appropriated account is created, expenditures from which must be used to carry out the purposes of the Council.

Invasive species, for purposes of this bill, are defined as "nonnative organisms that cause economic or environmental harm and are capable of spreading to new areas of the state." This term does not include domestic livestock, intentionally planted agronomic crops, or nonharmful exotic organisms.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For (Natural Resources, Ocean & Recreation): Invasive species impact the entire state. Public and private entities spend a great deal of money annually to combat their spread. Coordination between entities dealing with invasive species would decrease programmatic duplication and allow greater focus on preventing invasive species from entering the state.

Testimony Against (Natural Resources, Ocean & Recreation): None.

Who Testified (Natural Resources, Ocean & Recreation): PRO: Jim Davis, Olympia Coast Alliance; Jack Field, Washington Cattlemen's Association; Penny Speaks, Department of Natural Resources; Steve McGonigal, Washington State Noxious Weed Control Board; Catherine Hovanie, Washington Native Plant Society; Bill Robinson, The Nature Conservancy; Ron Schultz, Department of Ecology; Raymond Willard, Department of Transportation; Scott Smith, Department of Fish and Wildlife; Martin Flynn, Washington Invasive Species Coalition; Steve Robinson, NW Indian Fisheries Commission.

Testimony For (Ways & Means): Moving the Council to the IAC may be appropriate.

Testimony Against (Ways & Means): None.

Who Testified (Ways & Means): Ron Schultz, Department of Ecology.