

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5385

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Natural Resources, Ocean & Recreation, February 24, 2005
Ways & Means, March 7, 2005

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

Brief Description: Creating the Washington invasive species council.

Sponsors: 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)].

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 Substitute Bill: The Washington Invasive Species Council is created in the Office of the Governor to provide policy direction, planning, and coordination for combating and preventing harmful invasive species in the state. The membership of the Council includes representatives from five state entities. Representatives from three federal agencies must be invited to participate in a nonvoting capacity. The Council 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 Legislature.

An account is created to provide grants and loans to address invasive species issues. 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.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The substitute bill narrows the number of state agencies with representation on the council. The requirement that the council establish advisory committees, and the statutorily mandated membership for such committees, is removed. Expenditures from the invasive species council account are made subject to appropriation.

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.