

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5528

As Passed Senate, March 8, 2005

Title: An act relating to the department of ecology's inspection fees for hydraulic works.

Brief Description: Eliminating certain fees for hydraulic works inspections.

Sponsors: Senators Morton, Mulliken, Schoesler, Benson, Delvin, Honeyford, Carrell, McCaslin and Stevens.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Water, Energy & Environment: 2/10/05, 2/15/05 [DP].
Passed Senate: 3/8/05, 41-6.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WATER, ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Poulsen, Chair; Rockefeller, Vice Chair; Morton, Ranking Minority Member; Hewitt and Honeyford.

Staff: Richard Rodger (786-7461)

Background: Last year the Department of Ecology (DOE) was directed to increase the fees for plan reviews of new dams and for inspections of existing dams to ensure the fees covered the program's actual costs. The DOE was also directed to conduct inspections of high hazard dams once every five years, rather than the previous schedule of every six to ten years.

The inspection fee for high hazard dams is now set at \$688/year and the fee for significant hazard dams is \$150/year. The new fees too were effective September 4, 2004. High hazard dams include those dams located upstream of three or more residences and significant hazard dams are those located upstream of one or two homes.

The legislature did not provide any relief from the new fees for newly constructed dams.

Summary of Bill: The Department of Ecology (DOE) must not charge an inspection fee for any dam constructed less than ten years ago when its plans and specifications were approved for safety by DOE. For dams constructed more than ten years ago and less than twenty years, DOE is restricted to charging a fee no greater than the fee for a "significant hazard dam."

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect retroactively on September 4, 2004 .

Testimony For: The legislature needs to provide relief to the owners of new dams whose safety has been approved by Ecology. These structures are very expensive to build and provide great benefits to the state. The dams improve water storage and flood control, provide wetlands and habitat, and protect the rivers from silt and soil erosion.

Other: This bill will affect approximately 37 high hazard dams and 20 significant hazard dams. The bill will result in refunds for fees paid since September, and a loss of revenue in the future.

Testimony Against: None.

Who Testified: PRO: Mike Matney, citizen. NEUTRAL: Doug Johnson, Department of Ecology.