

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SHB 2471

As Passed House:
February 14, 2008

Title: An act relating to the Washington geological survey.

Brief Description: Modifying the responsibilities of the Washington geological survey.

Sponsors: By House Committee on Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representatives Dickerson, VanDeWege, McCoy and Kenney; by request of Department of Natural Resources).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Agriculture & Natural Resources: 1/16/08, 1/24/08 [DP];
Appropriations: 2/5/08 [DPS].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/14/08, 94-0.

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Expands the duties of the Department of Natural Resource's state geological survey and renames it the Washington Geological Survey.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 11 members: Representatives Blake, Chair; Van De Wege, Vice Chair; Kretz, Ranking Minority Member; Warnick, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Grant, Lantz, Loomis, McCoy, Nelson, Newhouse and Orcutt.

Staff: Colleen Kerr (786-7168).

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 34 members: Representatives Sommers, Chair; Dunshee, Vice Chair; Alexander, Ranking Minority Member; Bailey, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Haler, Assistant

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Ranking Minority Member; Anderson, Chandler, Cody, Conway, Darneille, Ericks, Fromhold, Grant, Green, Haigh, Hinkle, Hunt, Hunter, Kagi, Kenney, Kessler, Kretz, Linville, McDonald, McIntire, Morrell, Pettigrew, Priest, Ross, Schmick, Schual-Berke, Seaquist, Sullivan and Walsh.

Staff: Alicia Dunkin (786-7178).

Background:

Washington requires the Commissioner of Public Lands to appoint a state geologist to conduct a geological survey of the state. The geological survey must include the following information:

- an examination of the state's mineral products, including gold, copper, lead, and iron ores, as well as building stones, clays, and coal;
- an examination and classification of soils and a study of their adaptability to particular crops;
- an investigation and report on water supplies, artesian wells, and the water power of the state, with reference to their application for irrigation and other purposes;
- an examination and report on the occurrence of different road-building materials;
- an examination of the physical features of the state with reference to their practical bearing for state employment;
- special geological and economic maps to illustrate the resources of the state; and
- special reports with illustrations and maps that reflect the geology and natural resources of the state.

The survey's reports are printed at the direction of the state geologist. Any revenue received from the sale of the reports are paid into the state treasury.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

The survey will be known as the Washington Geological Survey. It shall serve as a bureau of information and an advisory service concerning geological resources and hazards. This service must include:

- maintenance of a library;
- a public education program;
- a geological database to review functions;
- provide expert advice to federal, state, and local government agencies;
- act as a clearinghouse of posthazard event earth science investigations; and
- provide technical assistance to local governments on geological hazards, mineral resources, and aggregate mining and reclamation during preparation and amendment of comprehensive plans and land-use regulations.

The survey shall collect geotechnical and related reports prepared and submitted by state and local permit applicants to develop a statewide electronic database of subsurface geotechnical data. Copies of such reports must be submitted to the survey by the permit applicant at the time of permit application.

The survey shall preserve information collected in this section, and nonconfidential data collected under 78.44 and 78.52 RCW, in a publicly accessible electronic data system that displays the surface and subsurface geological data using an interactive map interface for two- and three-dimensional display. The survey shall also establish and maintain a storage and examination facility for physical geological samples of long-term value to the state.

Reports produced by the survey shall be distributed under the direction of the state geologist as needed by the state and science. The primary means of distribution shall be through a publicly accessible electronic data system with digital maps, but may be printed as directed by the state geologist.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed. However, the bill is null and void unless funded in the budget.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: (Agriculture & Natural Resources)

(In support) This bill is the significant legislation passed last year for the state geological survey. This builds on that legislation. The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) wants to modernize and standardize its data collection, and make it available to the public online. These new duties will allow the DNR to capture all the information provided in studies and reports for individual permit applications in a consolidated form and make it available for public access and the benefit of the state. These kinds of reports are currently not maintained anywhere in an accessible format, and it is a loss to the state. The expanded duties will include an inventory of the state's geothermal resources, geological events, and posthazard events and issues. Through the survey, the state will have critical geotechnical information on a broad basis to support long-term sustainable environment. Broader survey information allows the state to work from best science as it considers initiatives regarding climate changes and other environmental policies.

(opposed) None.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: (Appropriations)

(In support) The bill builds on the work of this Legislature when we previously passed the Washington geological survey bill. This topic sounds boring but it saves lives. The planning for local jurisdictions is important and so is the timing. As you know the state went through a lot of flooding and we need to know the subsurface information in order to make decisions about the surface. The bill is scalable and provides a system to prevent the loss of valuable geologic data that would otherwise be filed or thrown away. This bill will allow the collection of soil borings and aggregate information. There would be no cost to local governments. The Department of General Administration has used existing information stored by the Department of Natural Resources for slope stabilization and building plans, which has saved thousands of dollars.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: (Agriculture & Natural Resources) Vicki Christiansen and Dave Norman, Department of Natural Resources; and Jim Jesernic, Battelle Northwest.

Persons Testifying: (Appropriations) Representative Dickerson, prime sponsor; and Vicki Christiansen, Department of Natural Resources.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: (Agriculture & Natural Resources) None.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: (Appropriations) None.