

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SHB 2472

As Passed House:
February 13, 2008

Title: An act relating to establishing a work group to make recommendations for improving recreation on state trust lands, aquatic lands, and other state-owned lands managed by the department of natural resources.

Brief Description: Seeking to improve recreational opportunities on state-owned lands managed by the department of natural resources.

Sponsors: By House Committee on Ecology & Parks (originally sponsored by Representatives Blake, Warnick, Condotta, Sells, Linville, Hinkle, VanDeWege, McCoy, Lantz, Morrell, Loomis, Kretz, Chase, Kristiansen and McDonald; by request of Department of Natural Resources).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Ecology & Parks: 1/15/08, 1/22/08 [DPS].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/13/08, 96-0.

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Creates a work group to make recommendations to the Legislature regarding recreation on lands managed by the Department of Natural Resources.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ECOLOGY & PARKS

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Upthegrove, Chair; Rolfes, Vice Chair; Sump, Ranking Minority Member; Dickerson, Dunshee, Eickmeyer, Kristiansen, O'Brien and Pearson.

Staff: Jason Callahan (786-7117).

Background:

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) manages nearly three million acres of uplands and over two million acres of aquatic lands. Although each of the individual land holdings are managed by the DNR for a specific benefit or purpose, the concept of multiple use management overlays all of the DNR-managed land.

"Multiple use" means the provision of several uses simultaneously on the same tract of land. Outdoor recreation, in all of its various forms, is one of the multiple uses that the DNR is directed to provide when the recreation does not negatively impact the underlying land management purposes. Many lands managed by the DNR are used for hunting, fishing, hiking, camping, and motorized vehicle riding.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

A work group is established to make recommendations to the Legislature regarding recreation on lands managed by the DNR. The work group must return a report to the Legislature by no later than December 1, 2008, that examines relevant existing laws and rules relating to recreation on state lands, recommends policy changes, and considers funding alternatives.

Members of the work group must be appointed by the Commissioner of Public Lands (Commissioner), and represent a balanced group of individuals with knowledge, perspectives, and interest in recreation. In addition to stakeholder representatives appointed by the Commissioner, the Commissioner must also invite tribal, gubernatorial, and legislative representation to the work group.

The work group is to be chaired by the Commissioner or the Commissioner's designee, and staff to the work group is to be provided by the DNR. Any funding to pay for the work group's activities must be provided from the DNR's general fund appropriation.

In conducting its analyses, the work group must have at least two public workshops and hold meetings in diverse locations around the state.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) Access to public lands has been diminishing as the state's population has increased, and as a result, opportunities for the state's citizens to participate in their outdoor cultural heritage has also diminished. Recreation on state lands is important, but must be done in a way that is environmentally responsible and funded in a sustainable way.

The current state recreation policies on the DNR's land is outdated and not reflective of modern realities. Since the adoption of the current policies, multiple use concepts have been adopted for state land management, and many new forms of recreation have emerged. Many private landowners have closed access to their lands, increasing the pressure on public land.

Orderly use of land is necessary for its enjoyment. This includes having the ability to pay for security, sanitation, and other needs of the visitors.

The state park system gets a lot of attention, and it is time to focus on the DNR's lands as well. It is important to have a discussion about how access can be improved while protecting state trust assets. The participation of various interest groups is necessary to ensure a full understanding of the issues.

(With concerns) There are some categories of individuals and groups that are impacted by decisions about state land access policies that should be expressly included in the list of work group participants.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Blake, prime sponsor; Representative Warnick; Bonnie Bunning, Department of Natural Resources; Neil T. Morgan; Arlene Brooks, Pacific Northwest Four Wheel Drive Association; Mike Cenci, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife; and Jim King, Citizens for Parks and Recreation.

(With concerns) Miguel Perez-Gibson, Audubon Society; Ed Owens, Hunters Heritage Council; Jack Field, Washington Cattlemen's Association; and Jonathon Guzzo, Washington Trails Association.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.