

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2477

As Reported by House Committee On:
Agriculture & Natural Resources

Title: An act relating to groundwater monitoring and assessment.

Brief Description: Providing for groundwater monitoring and assessments.

Sponsors: Representatives McCoy, Williams, Dickerson, Dunshee, Lantz, Hasegawa, Ormsby, McIntire, Kagi, Upthegrove, Chase, Linville and Hunt.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Agriculture & Natural Resources: 1/23/08, 1/31/08 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Directs the Department of Ecology (DOE) to conduct two pilot groundwater assessment programs, and a data gap analysis.
- Requires the DOE to improve their ambient groundwater monitoring and assessment program.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Blake, Chair; Kretz, Ranking Minority Member; Warnick, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Eickmeyer, Grant, Loomis, McCoy, Nelson and Orcutt.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 2 members: Representatives Van De Wege, Vice Chair; Newhouse.

Staff: Jaclyn Ford (786-7339).

Background:

The Department of Ecology (DOE) has the ability to monitor groundwater areas, collect data, and keep a water resources information system as part of their Water Resource Data Program.

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.

Most of the general information collected is found on the DOE website. However data collection is maintained throughout many of the individual programs at the DOE, local governments, and the federal government and has not been combined into one uniform database.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

The DOE's groundwater monitoring program will be improved by standardizing methods, quality assurance, and data management practices, as well as migrating existing DOE and water resources inventory areas (WRIAs) data to a central database.

By June 30, 2011, the DOE will conduct a voluntary pilot groundwater assessment program in both western and eastern Washington. The pilot programs will be conducted in WRIAs experiencing serious or critical withdrawals.

By June 30, 2009, the DOE will prepare a gap analysis that evaluates existing groundwater information on water levels and water quality throughout Washington's WRIAs.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

This bill provides a completion date of June 2009 for migrating data to a central database, and specifies that the data will be existing DOE and WRIAs data. This bill eliminates language directing the DOE to expand and support the current ambient monitoring activities. This bill changes the date of the pilot projects from June 30, 2009, to June 30, 2011, and specifies that they will be voluntary pilot programs. This bill changes the date of the data gap analysis from December 31, 2008, to June 30, 2009, and specifies that the DOE will evaluate existing groundwater information on water levels and water quality within each WRIA. This bill requires the DOE to summarize historic and current monitoring of ambient groundwater levels and water quality across Washington. The appropriation section requesting \$2.5 million is eliminated in this bill.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available. Fiscal note on proposed substitute requested on January 31, 2008.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) This bill will help everyone in Washington understand our groundwater resources. The DOE does not know what is going on in the aquifers. Information is not collected uniformly. This bill would allow for a better understanding of the data already collected, as well as help collect other valuable data. The groundwater study in the bill is important; the study will help the DOE know whether surface water is affected in areas by the

groundwater. Groundwater assessments are very successful in helping make decisions about water use. The assessments help people make a connection to their water system. There will be a crisis over the next few decades over water resources. Groundwater resources may be used to alleviate this crisis, if the data is available. Groundwater may be used for storage purposes. In order to sustainably manage the resource, more information is needed. It is wise to get the U.S. Geological Survey involved. Standardizing methods is very important. Most agencies use the data provided on a constant basis. Duplication on projects is easy to ascertain and therefore not an issue to worry about. It is important to begin collecting this data or else Washington will be hit by a water crisis.

(With concerns) Increased clarity is a requisite for a sustainable water system. It's hard to manage what you can not see. The DOE needs to make the system fair, and knowledge is imperative in achieving fairness. Surface water has been a focus at the DOE, but groundwater is an area that the DOE needs more data on. This bill lays the foundation for this effort of achieving more data. This bill allows the DOE to plan more efficiently. Everything happens at once in this bill; the DOE would prefer a more staged program. This bill will take years to complete.

(Opposed) This is duplicative of studies already underway. The WRIA programs already cover many of these issues. The USGS already has vast studies on aquifer models. The goals of the bill can be achieved without the large appropriation. Efforts are already underway to achieve these goals. The WRIAs have all done the gap analysis. The WRIAs would prefer money for their priorities at the watershed scale. The WRIAs would prefer the DOE work with the local watershed planning groups to implement the program.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative McCoy, prime sponsor; Sue Gunn, Center for Environmental Law and Policy; Kahle Jennings, Chehalis Basin Partnership and City of Centralia; Michael Laurie, Vashon-Maury Island Groundwater Protection Commission; Sandy Williamson, U.S. Geological Survey; Alan Hamlet, Climate Impacts Group, University of Washington; J. Roach; Michael Mayer, Washington Environmental Council; Patricia Sumption, Sierra Club and Friends of Green River; Darcy Nonemacher, American Rivers; and John Stuhlmiller, Washington Farm Bureau.

(With concerns) Rob Duff and Evan Sheffels, Washington Department of Ecology; and Kathleen Collins, Washington Water Policy Alliance.

(Opposed) Glen Smith, Washington State Groundwater Association; and David McClure, Klickitat County.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.