

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 5074

As Reported by House Committee On:
Agriculture & Natural Resources

Title: An act relating to water resource inventory area 29.

Brief Description: Dividing water resource inventory area 29 into WRIA 29a and WRIA 29b.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Water, Energy & Telecommunications (originally sponsored by Senators Honeyford, Poulsen, Schoesler and Delvin).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Agriculture & Natural Resources: 3/22/07, 3/28/07 [DPA].

**Brief Summary of Substitute Bill
(As Amended by House Committee)**

- Bifurcates Watershed Resource Inventory Area 29 into two distinct planning units under the Watershed Planning Act.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 14 members: Representatives B. Sullivan, Chair; Blake, Vice Chair; Kretz, Ranking Minority Member; Warnick, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Dickerson, Eickmeyer, Grant, Hailey, Kagi, McCoy, Newhouse, Orcutt, Strow and VanDeWege.

Staff: Jason Callahan (786-7117).

Background:

Watershed Planning

The Watershed Planning Act establishes a process through which local groups can develop and implement plans for managing and protecting local water resources and rights. The local groups authorized to develop watershed plans are organized by water resource inventory areas (WRIAs). A WRIA is, generally speaking, an area determined to be a distinct watershed.

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.

There are 62 WRIsAs identified by the Department of Ecology (Department). Each WRIA is identified by a number and may contain a local watershed planning group with an identified lead entity. The WRIA 40, which is located in central Washington, is unique in that the Legislature specifically bifurcated the watershed into two distinct WRIsAs and authorized separate planning processes for each WRIA.

Once constituted, a WRIA is eligible for grant funding from the Department. There are funding opportunities available for both planning and implementation.

Not all WRIsAs are in the same stage of development. Some WRIA planning groups are implementing their plans, while others have yet to have a local watershed group form. In between, there are WRIA groups that have an approved plan awaiting implementation, WRIA groups still developing the local plan, WRIA groups where the planning process has been terminated, and WRIA groups with developed plans awaiting county approval.

WRIA 29

The WRIA 29 is the Wind-White Salmon watershed, and is located in Yakima, Klickitat, and Skamania counties. The WRIA surrounds the city of White Salmon, and drains into the Columbia River. The lead agency for the WRIA 29 watershed group is Skamania County and the governments initiating the planning process are the counties sharing the WRIA, along with the Yakama Nation, the city of White Salmon, and the Skamania Public Utility District. The Department has awarded the WRIA 29 planning group with \$500,000 in grants through the year 2005, and the planning group has initiated a planning process, but has not begun implementation.

Summary of Amended Bill:

The WRIA 29 is bifurcated into two distinct planning units under the Watershed Planning Act. The WRIA 29b is to be identified as the areas east of the White Salmon sub-basin, and WRIA 29a is to be all other areas of the existing WRIA 29. Both WRIA 29a and WRIA 29b are eligible for half of the funding normally made available to a WRIA under the Watershed Planning Act.

Amended Bill Compared to Substitute Bill:

The amendment changed the funding available to the new WRIA 29a from the full amount available for a single WRIA to one-half of the amount available for a single WRIA.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) The differences between the portions of WRIA 29 on either side of the White Salmon River are significant. Each part of the WRIA has different county governments, different land uses, and different ownership patterns. The bill presents an opportunity to build on considerable planning work already done in the WRIA and to address important salmon habitat issues and the underlying issues that have led to a building moratorium in the city of White Salmon.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Senator Honeyford, prime sponsor; Gale Blomstrom, Department of Ecology; and David McClure, Klickitat County.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.