

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 5236

As Reported by House Committee On:
Agriculture & Natural Resources

Title: An act relating to public lands management.

Brief Description: Concerning the management of public lands.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Natural Resources, Ocean & Recreation (originally sponsored by Senators Parlette, Fraser and Rockefeller).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Agriculture & Natural Resources: 3/19/07, 3/22/07 [DPA].

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

- Creates the Habitat and Recreation Lands Coordinating Group to take a number of actions in regard to state land acquisition and disposal.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 13 members: Representatives B. Sullivan, Chair; Blake, Vice Chair; Kretz, Ranking Minority Member; Warnick, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Dickerson, Eickmeyer, Grant, Hailey, Kagi, Lantz, McCoy, Newhouse and Strow.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 1 member: Representative Orcutt.

Staff: Jason Callahan (786-7117).

Background:

The Interagency Committee for Outdoor Recreation (IAC) was required by the Legislature to report by June 30, 2005, regarding public acquisition of habitat and recreational lands. The report included an inventory of recreation and habitat land transfers by state agencies since 1980, and covered specified types of transfers, principal uses of the land, agencies involved, costs and returns, funding sources, and a review of land transfer authorizations. The report

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.

also included a recommended statewide strategy for coordinating habitat and recreation acquisitions by state agencies.

The required report was filed in 2005, and entitled "Toward A Coordination Strategy for Habitat and Recreation Land Acquisitions in Washington State." The IAC found that the proper scope of agency coordination was one of the biggest challenges faced in the development of the report.

Summary of Amended Bill:

The Habitat and Recreation Lands Coordinating Group (Coordinating Group) is created to include representatives of the IAC, the State Parks and Recreation Commission, the Department of Natural Resources, and the Department of Fish and Wildlife. Appropriate stakeholder organizations and local governments must also be considered for participation in the Coordinating Group.

The Coordinating Group must take a number of actions in regard to state land acquisition and disposal. These actions include the following:

- review agency land acquisition and disposal plans to ensure coordination, and produce a statewide biennial forecast of the plans to be published on websites;
- convene an annual forum where agencies can coordinate near-term acquisition and disposal plans;
- recommend a method of using geographic information system-based documentation of land acquisition and disposal;
- recommend a standard process for acquisition and disposal record keeping;
- develop an approach for monitoring the success of acquisitions;
- identify a way to work with state and federal partners to develop an inventory of potential public lands for transfer into habitat and recreational land management status;
- review existing habitat conservation plans to foster coordination and save costs;
- develop options for centralizing coordination of acquisitions made with federal funding; and
- revisit the planning requirements of the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program to determine if coordination between agencies can be enhanced.

Progress towards completion of these tasks must be reported to the Office of Financial Management annually.

The Coordinating Group's authority expires in 2012. Prior to that date, there must be a report to the Legislature recommending whether the Coordinating Group should be continued, and if so, whether any changes should be made to its enabling statute.

Amended Bill Compared to Substitute Bill:

Specifies that only the Director of the IAC can invite non-state participants to the Coordinating Group, and provides a 2012 expiration date with a report prior to the expiration regarding whether the expiration should be extended.

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 idea for this bill comes from a study conducted by the IAC that reviewed land purchases in Washington. The study was conducted because there are six counties in the state that have a very low percentage of private land ownerships, which means that local governments have a reduced tax role to work with. This legislation embodies the recommendations from the IAC study that state agencies should better communicate among each other when it comes to land acquisition. Implementing the recommendation can be done within existing resources and will serve as a benefit to the management of public lands in the state.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Senator Parlette, prime sponsor; Jim Fox, Interagency Committee on Outdoor Recreation; and Mark Quinn, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.