

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SB 6275

As Reported by House Committee On:
Agriculture & Natural Resources

Title: An act relating to drainage district commissioners' authority.

Brief Description: Granting authority for drainage district commissioners to implement drainage maintenance plans.

Sponsors: Senators Haugen and Rasmussen.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Agriculture & Natural Resources: 2/25/08, 2/27/08 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Authorizes drainage districts to implement the provisions of drainage maintenance plans that have been adopted by the drainage districts.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 13 members: Representatives Blake, Chair; Van De Wege, Vice Chair; Kretz, Ranking Minority Member; Warnick, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Eickmeyer, Grant, Kristiansen, Lantz, Loomis, McCoy, Nelson, Newhouse and Orcutt.

Staff: Colleen Kerr (786-7168).

Background:

The formation of drainage districts is authorized under state laws that date back to 1895. The board of a drainage district consists of three elected commissioners. Under statute, the drainage district board is authorized to develop a general plan of improvement and to carry out a number of activities with respect to maintenance, improvement, construction, alternation, or abandonment of existing drains or ditches.

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.

Summary of Bill:

Drainage districts are specifically authorized to implement the provisions of drainage maintenance plans that have been adopted by the district.

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) There has been some question as to whether drainage district boards already have the authority to implement the plans they develop. This bill provides that clarification. Issues between drainage districts and the Department of Fish and Wildlife became contentious a few years ago. Both sides put in resources and began to collaborate on finding solutions that will protect agricultural lands that depend on properly operating drainage systems and also will address the needs of fish. The updated drainage district plans have components that address the fish habitat. This will result in the issuance of a programmatic hydraulic permit that is good for five year periods and is renewable. This legislation is needed to give explicit authority to the districts so they can implement these drainage plans. This clarification will facilitate the local governments in interacting with both the state and federal entities involved in this issue.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Chris Cheney, Western Washington Agriculture Association; Peter Birch, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife; and Jack Field, Washington Cattlemen's Association.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.