
Ecology & Parks Committee

ESSB 6308

Brief Description: Preparing for and adapting to climate change.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Water, Energy & Telecommunications (originally sponsored by Senators Rockefeller, Regala, Murray, Kohl-Welles, Marr, Pridemore, Oemig, Kilmer, Jacobsen, Kline, Shin and McAuliffe).

Brief Summary of Engrossed Substitute Bill

- Requires the Department of Ecology to report to the Governor and to the Legislature with recommendations for creating a comprehensive climate change research, preparation, and adaptation program.
- Creates the Office of Washington State Climatologist within the University of Washington.

Hearing Date: 2/27/08

Staff: Jaclyn Ford (786-7339).

Background:

On February 7, 2007 the Governor issued executive order 07-02 establishing goals for greenhouse gas emissions reductions, increasing clean energy sector jobs, and reducing expenditures on imported fuel. The executive order also directed the Department of Ecology (DOE) and the Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development (DCTED) to lead stakeholders in a process that considers a full range of policies and strategies to achieve the emissions goals.

In response to the Governor's executive order, the DOE and the DCTED have formed the Washington Climate Advisory Team (CAT) to assist with the development of specific action-oriented recommendations for climate change mitigation policies and plans for Washington. Their report is due to the Governor in 2008. The final report will compile and summarize recommended policy options of the CAT based on the outcome of final votes on individual recommendations.

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.

Preparation and Adaptation Working Groups (PAWGs) have been formed as a part of the CAT to assist the DOE and the DCTED in developing recommendations for the Governor on how Washington can prepare and adapt to the impacts of climate change. The Departments of Agriculture, Health, Natural Resources and Ecology will lead PAWGs that will examine climate change impacts, and identify preparation and adaptation strategies and additional research needs. PAWGs are structured around five sectors:

- Agriculture: species changes, crop changes, and pests
- Forestry Resources: growth (rate, species), pests, fires (loss of timber, loss of recreational value, costs to fight)
- Human Health: air quality (ozone, particulates), heat stroke, pests/vectors, and zoonotic disease
- Water Resources and Quality: freshwater, in-stream flows, municipal water, industrial water, flooding/droughts, storm water, salmon recovery, stream temps, hydropower, and water supply
- Coastal and Infrastructure: infrastructure design and location, erosion, coastal flooding, habitat, and other issues identified by the group as important for consideration

Summary of Bill:

By November 1, 2008 the DOE must report to the Governor and to the Legislature with recommendations for creating a comprehensive climate change research, preparation, and adaptation program. The DOE must develop its report based on the work of the PAWGs established by Executive Order 07-02.

The report must include at least the following:

- criteria to establish state-funded research priorities;
- methods to ensure data and information systems will be most effective for and accessible to relevant planning jurisdictions and the public generally;
- funding that may be needed by local, regional, state, and other planning jurisdictions; and
- any specific projects or pilot projects identified to ensure the state is adequately prepared for the impacts of climate change.

When developing the report, the DOE must consider private, public, and tribal interests who may be impacted by the recommendations of the report or specific impacts of climate change being considered by the workgroups. These groups must be invited to participate in developing the report.

The Office of Washington State Climatologist is created within the University of Washington. The State Climatologist represents the state in all climatological and meteorological matters when requested by the legislative or executive branches of state government and serves as a credible and expert source of climate and weather information for state and local decision makers and agencies. The State Climatologist is appointed by the president of the University of Washington.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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