

SENATE BILL REPORT

2EHB 1743

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Agriculture & Rural Economic Development, February 25, 2008

Title: An act relating to noxious weed control boards.

Brief Description: Requiring the appointment of county noxious weed control boards.

Sponsors: Representatives Kretz, B. Sullivan, Sump, Upthegrove and Linville.

Brief History: Passed House: 2/12/08, 91-4.

Committee Activity: Agriculture & Rural Economic Development: 2/21/08, 2/25/08 [DP, DNP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Rasmussen, Chair; Hatfield, Vice Chair; Jacobsen and Morton.

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senator Schoesler, Ranking Minority Member.

Staff: Bob Lee (786-7404)

Background: Current law establishes optional procedures by which a county may activate or deactivate a county noxious weed control board. In counties that do not have an active weed control board, the Department of Agriculture may take actions to cause noxious weeds to be controlled.

Summary of Bill: Beginning on January 1, 2009, and thereafter, each county must have a county weed board in place, appointed in the manner prescribed in law. Existing statutory provisions for the activation and deactivation of county noxious weed control boards are repealed. The power of the Department of Agriculture director to take action to control noxious weeds and enforce the law in counties without an activated noxious weed control board ends on January 1, 2009.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

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.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Second Engrossed Bill: PRO: There have been several studies of Douglas County over the years, and they show that noxious weeds aren't being controlled. A number of counties have complained about Douglas County's lack of weed control, and there is concern that weeds are being transported into adjacent counties and across the river. This bill will make it so that all counties will have active weed control boards. Twenty-three counties currently have assessments to support their weed control program, with the rest being funded from the county general fund. The federal government relies on county weed boards to do the checking to see if weeds are being controlled as required on Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) lands. Having a weed board would allow hay growers to certify hay as weed free to meet the federal Forest Service requirements for weed free hay.

CON: Douglas County has a weed management program that involves the county, Washington State University, and Foster Creek Conservation District. The carrot method is effective. The county has a seven-member task force that represents various regions of the county. Thirty percent of county wheat lands are enrolled in the federal CRP, which requires farmers to control weeds on these lands, or they lose their payments. The county doesn't have much money, wants to be frugal and not have to pay for an administrator to operate the weed board. The county works to eradicate new species of weeds, but weeds like Dalmatian toadflax has gotten so well established that they can't get rid of it. All counties still have problems with noxious weeds so establishing a weed board doesn't mean that the weeds will be eradicated.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Joel Kretz, prime sponsor; Roy Brunshill, King County Noxious Weed Control Board; Ray Fann, State Noxious Weed Control Board; Bob Brooke, Backcountry Horsemen of Washington, Washington State Weed Coordinators Association.

CON: Mary Hunt, Douglas County Commissioner; Jim Potts, Douglas County; Scott Dahlman, Washington State Grange.