

SENATE BILL REPORT

SSB 5074

As Amended by House, April 4, 2007

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: Water, Energy & Telecommunications: 1/30/07, 2/13/07 [DPS].
Passed Senate: 3/05/07, 45-0.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WATER, ENERGY & TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5074 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Poulsen, Chair; Rockefeller, Vice Chair; Honeyford, Ranking Minority Member; Fraser, Holmquist, Marr, Morton, Oemig, Pridemore and Regala.

Staff: Jan Odano (786-7486)

Background: The Watershed Planning Act establishes a mechanism for conducting watershed planning through a locally initiated process through which local groups can develop and implement plans for managing and protecting local water resources and rights. The process requires watershed planning to include an assessment of water supply and use in the planning area and development of strategies for future water use. The assessment may also include water quality, habitat, and instream flow elements.

The local groups authorized to develop watershed plans are organized by water resource inventory areas (WRIA). A WRIA is, generally speaking, an area determined to be a distinct watershed or river basin. Local groups developing watershed plans are eligible for grant funding from the Department of Ecology (department). Watershed plans are conducted in four phases: (1) initiation and organization of a planning unit (\$50,000 for single WRIA planning units, and up to \$75,000 in multi-WRIA units); (2) water quantity assessment and future use strategy (up to \$200,000); (3) development of a watershed plan and recommendations for action (up to \$250,000); and (4) implementation of the plan (up to \$100,000 for phase four stage for each of the first three years of implementation and an additional two-year extension of up to \$50,000 for each year of the extension—for a total phase four funding potential of \$400,000).

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.

Currently, there are 62 WRIsAs identified by the department. Each WRIA is identified by a number and may contain a local watershed planning group with an identified lead entity. WRIA 40, located in central Washington, is unique in that the Legislature bifurcated the watershed into two distinct WRIsAs and authorized separate planning processes. Between WRIA 40a and 40b, the assigned funding is split so that one WRIA receives 25 percent of the available funding and the other WRIA receives 75 percent of the available funding.

The WRIsAs eligible to participate in the planning process are in different stages of development. Some WRIsAs are implementing their plans, while others have yet to have a local watershed group form. There are WRIsAs awaiting implementation of approved plans; developing local plans; awaiting county approval of developed plans; and WRIsAs that have terminated the planning process.

WRIA 29: WRIA 29 is the Wind-White Salmon River Basin located in south-central Washington and encompasses an area of more than 900 square miles that includes areas in Skamania, Klickitat, and Yakima counties. WRIA 29 was divided into six subbasins. The four major subbasins listed from west to east include: Rock Creek, Wind River, Little White Salmon, and White Salmon River. The area requested for WRIA 29b designation is the White Salmon River basin. The lead agency for the WRIA 29 watershed group is Skamania County, and the initiating governments are Klickitat County, Yakima County, City of White Salmon, Skamania County, Skamania PUD, Yakama Nation. To date, WRIA 29 has received \$500,000 for the first three phases of planning.

WRIA30: The WRIA 30 planning effort was initiated in 1999 with the concurrence of Klickitat County, Yakima County, City of Goldendale, and Public Utility District No. 1 of Klickitat County (KPUD). The border of Washington and Oregon at the Columbia River is WRIA 30's southern boundary. WRIA 30 is divided into six subbasins: Upper Klickitat, Middle Klickitat, Little Klickitat, Swale, Lower Klickitat, and Columbia Tributaries. The Upper Klickitat Subbasin and the eastern part of the Middle Klickitat Subbasin are largely within the Yakama Indian Reservation, which is outside the geographical scope of this watershed management plan. If WRIA 29b is combined with WRIA 30 it would be a seventh subbasin.

Summary of Substitute Bill: WRIA 29 is divided into two separate areas. Those portions of WRIA 29 located entirely within the White Salmon subbasin as well as the subbasins to the east will be designated as WRIA 29b. All other remaining portions of WRIA 29 are designated WRIA 29a.

WRIA 29a will remain eligible for all funding available to a WRIA. WRIA 29b will be eligible for one-half of the funding available for a single WRIA.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: DOE is supportive of the split and wants watershed plans to move forward but would like the Legislature to be aware of the different funding scenarios for this plan. There is a big difference in land ownership and uses between the eastern and the western portions of WRIA 29. The eastern portion is mostly owned by the State and Federal Government and the western side is owned privately and used for agriculture. It may be best to combine 29b with WRIA 30 but would like flexibility to address it separately. Current estimate of cost to move forward with planning for WRIA 29b is \$516,000 to \$562,000. The Yakama Nation supports moving forward with 29b as a separate WRIA and could bring some money to the table as well for habitat planning. Clarification that land within the Yakama Nation is within WRIA 30 although it is not included in the WRIA 30 management plan.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Joe Stohr, Department of Ecology; Don Struck, Klickitat County; David McClure, Klickitat County; Dawn Vyvyan, Yakama Nation.

House Amendment(s): WRIA 29a is eligible for one half of the funding available for a single WRIA.