

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6211

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Natural Resources, Ocean & Recreation, January 17, 2008

Title: An act relating to the Washington geological survey.

Brief Description: Modifying the responsibilities of the Washington geological survey.

Sponsors: Senators Morton, Jacobsen, Rockefeller and Swecker; by request of Department of Natural Resources.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Natural Resources, Ocean & Recreation: 1/16/08, 1/17/08 [DP-WM, w/oRec].

Ways & Means: 2/04/08.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES, OCEAN & RECREATION

Majority Report: Do pass and be referred to the Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Jacobsen, Chair; Hatfield, Vice Chair; Morton, Ranking Minority Member; Fraser, Spanel and Swecker.

Minority Report: That it be referred without recommendation.

Signed by Senator Stevens.

Staff: Sherry McNamara (786-7402)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Staff: Elise Greef (786-7708)

Background: Current law sets forth the duties relating to the state geological survey (survey), which was created in 1890. The Commissioner of Public Lands appoints a Supervisor of Geology, also known as the State Geologist, to supervise the survey.

The objectives of the survey include: (1) an examination of the economic products of the state, including precious metals and building materials; (2) an examination and classification of the state's soils and their adaptability to certain crops; (3) an investigation into the water supplies of the state; (4) an examination of the occurrence of different road building material; (5) the preparation of special maps to illustrate the resources of the state; and (6) the consideration of other questions of value to the state.

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.

In addition, authority is provided for the printing of survey publications, for cooperation with the United States Geological Survey, and for agency access to private lands for survey purposes.

Summary of Bill: The geological survey is required to serve as a bureau of information and an advisory service for geologic resources and hazards. This includes maintaining a library, public education program, and geologic database. The survey will provide technical assistance to local governments on geological hazards, mineral resources, and aggregate mining and reclamation during preparation of comprehensive land-use plans and regulations.

The survey will collect geotechnical and related reports prepared by applicants in support of building construction and land-use permits from local governments or state government. The survey will use these reports in the development of a statewide electronic database of subsurface geotechnical data.

The survey is responsible for preserving the information collected, developed, or obtained under this act in a publicly accessible electronic data system. In addition, the survey will establish and maintain a storage and examination facility for physical samples. Also, the survey must promote outdoor recreation and education through the creation and dissemination of interpretive materials.

The survey must distribute reports, geological maps, geological hazard assessment maps, mineral resource maps, and special reports as the needs of the state and science demand.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 8, 2008.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Natural Resources, Ocean & Recreation): PRO: This legislation provides the tools for the Washington Geological Survey to inform decision-makers in real time. Making these changes will enhance earth science data management. It will establish a system to prevent the loss of important geological data by developing and maintaining data storage, retrieval and distribution. Updating the geological survey will provide modern methods to make the information more accessible through an interactive database. The survey will provide information to improve planning and guide decision-making in the future.

Persons Testifying (Natural Resources, Ocean & Recreation): PRO: Ron Teissere, Department of Natural Resources; Jim Jesernig, Battelle Northwest.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Ways & Means): PRO: The Department of Natural Resources has been collecting information since the late 1800s; this bill brings it into the modern age with computers and enables us to add the information we're now collecting. Contoured mapping is important for any expansion in the state. The global positioning satellite is at this location and would benefit from updated computer systems. Mining is important in the Northeast corner of the state and this information supports it. Data are collected daily — coring into the subsurface of the earth — and that data gets filed at best,

discarded at worst. These data are expensive and informative; important for the economy and the environment. Data would be available 24-7 to the public and at no cost to local governments.

Persons Testifying (Ways & Means): PRO: Senator Bob Morton, prime sponsor; Vicki Christiansen, Executive Director of Regulatory Programs, Department of Natural Resources.