

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6212

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Natural Resources, Ocean & Recreation, February 04, 2008

Title: An act relating to establishing a work group to make recommendations for improving recreation on state trust lands, aquatic lands, and other state-owned lands managed by the department of natural resources.

Brief Description: Seeking to improve recreational opportunities on state-owned lands managed by the department of natural resources.

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

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Natural Resources, Ocean & Recreation: 1/16/08, 2/04/08 [DPS].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES, OCEAN & RECREATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6212 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

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

Staff: Sherry McNamara (786-7402)

Background: Department of Natural Resources (DNR) manages more than 5 million acres of state land. More than 3 million acres of upland trust lands are managed to generate revenue for state trust beneficiaries, including common schools, state colleges and universities, and state institutions. In addition, DNR is responsible for 2.4 million acres of aquatic lands and about 120,000 acres of natural areas.

DNR provides recreation and public access opportunities such as hiking, hunting, fishing, camping, bird watching, and sightseeing on 2.2 million acres of state trust land. DNR currently manages trails, campgrounds, day-use facilities, picnic areas, boat launches, interpretive areas, and trail head facilities.

Current law requires recreation and public access on state trust lands to be compatible with the primary purpose of these lands which is to provide support for school construction and other public institutions. Other state lands are to be open and available to the public for hunting, fishing, and other wildlife activities unless those activities endanger crops on the land or when accessing the land could endanger a person.

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 (Recommended Substitute): A 28 member work group is established to make recommendations to improve recreation on state trust lands, aquatic lands, and other state-owned lands managed by DNR. The members are appointed by the Commissioner of Public Lands (Commissioner) in consultation with several entities, including but not limited to recreational associations and organizations; environmental protection associations and organizations; corporate and community leaders; major landowners; local government; tribal governments; state agencies; and the Legislature.

The work group's recommendations to improve recreation on state-owned lands must do the following:

- be compatible with adjacent and nearby land uses, including residential land uses;
- provide ways to coordinate trail maintenance work with volunteer organizations;
- consider the legal obligations for trusts, aquatic lands, and natural areas;
- be consistent with environmental standards needed to protect lands and natural systems; and
- be consistent with group recommendations such as the Puget Sound Action Agenda, the Washington Biodiversity Strategy and the Invasive Species Council.

The work group must conduct two open public workshops, one of which must be conducted in a location east of the Cascades. The Commissioner, or the Commissioner's designee, serves as the work group chair and is responsible for submitting a report to the Legislature by December 1, 2008 on its findings and recommendations.

EFFECT OF CHANGES MADE BY NATURAL RESOURCES, OCEAN & RECREATION COMMITTEE (Recommended Substitute): The work group must consist of no more than 28 members appointed by the Commissioner in consultation with several entities. The requirements for the work group's recommendations are expanded to include: coordination of trail maintenance work with volunteer organizations; and compatibility with adjacent and nearby land uses, including residential land uses as well as with other work group recommendations such as the Puget Sound Action Agenda, Washington Biodiversity Strategy, and the Invasive Species Council. The substitute requires the work group to conduct one of the two public meetings east of the Cascades.

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 on Original Bill: PRO: Recreational opportunities are important for the health and well-being of kids and adults. The state is at a crossroads with an increase in population and demand. There are new forms of recreation to deal with such as mountain biking, all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), and military reenactments. The purpose of this legislation is to look at laws, rules and policies and make sure we are ready for recreational opportunities in the future. This is a step in the right direction. The membership on the working group needs to include individual users, hunters, fishing and watchable wildlife representatives. The work group should be balanced between motorized and non-motorized

groups. It is important to keep law enforcement in mind to provide a policing presence on state lands.

OTHER: The composition of the work group needs to be balanced. It is important to include bird and wildlife watching on the work group. Equal access, signage and safety need to be addressed by the work group.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Bonnie Bunning, Department of Natural Resources; Neil Morgan, citizen; Ed Owens, Hunters Heritage Council; Jonathan Guzzo, Washington Trails Association; Jim King, Citizens for Parks Research.

OTHER: Heath Packard, Audubon Society.