

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6531

As Passed Senate, February 16, 2008

Title: An act relating to environmental mitigation in highway construction.

Brief Description: Addressing environmental mitigation in highway construction.

Sponsors: Senator Haugen.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Transportation: 1/24/08, 1/29/08, 2/04/08 [DP].

Passed Senate: 2/16/08, 49-0.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Haugen, Chair; Marr, Vice Chair; Murray, Vice Chair; Swecker, Ranking Minority Member; Berkey, Delvin, Holmquist, Kauffman, Kilmer, King, Pflug, Sheldon and Spanel.

Staff: Hayley Gamble (786-7452)

Background: Under the State and Federal Environmental Policy Acts, the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) is required to review unavoidable environmental impacts of transportation construction projects and identify possible mitigation measures. Mitigation may include enhancing existing environments, such as wetlands, or creating new habitats, such as new wetlands. Under the State Growth Management Act certain counties and cities are required to designate agricultural lands that are of long term commercial significance and develop conservation strategies applicable to those lands.

Summary of Bill: In the process of reviewing potential sites to be used as the mitigation component of a highway construction project, WSDOT must, to the greatest extent possible, consider using public land first. Additionally, WSDOT must make every effort to avoid any net loss of agricultural lands that have a designation of long-term commercial significance.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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: OTHER: While agreeing with the intent of the bill to preserve agricultural lands of long-term significance, it would be helpful if the review requirements were limited to projects that have the potential to impact these agricultural lands.

Persons Testifying: OTHER: Megan White, Department of Transportation.