

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 1972

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Natural Resources, Ocean & Recreation, March 23, 2009

Title: An act relating to accessing land for outdoor recreation.

Brief Description: Regarding access to information for outdoor recreation and wildlife viewing opportunities.

Sponsors: House Committee on Agriculture & Natural Resources (originally sponsored by Representatives Dunshee, Blake and Williams).

Brief History: Passed House: 3/06/09, 65-30.

Committee Activity: Natural Resources, Ocean & Recreation: 3/19/09, 3/23/09 [DP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES, OCEAN & RECREATION

Majority Report: Do pass.

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

Staff: Sherry McNamara (786-7402)

Background: The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) manages nearly a million acres of wildlife habitat and more than 150 water access sites. These lands provide wildlife protection while also allowing wildlife viewing, hiking, water sports, hunting, fishing, and other compatible recreation.

A WDFW Vehicle Use Permit must be displayed when using improved access facilities which are identified areas specifically created for vehicle parking and recreational use activities. Currently, a Vehicle Use Permit costs \$10 per year. One Vehicle Use Permit is issued free of charge with certain recreational fishing and hunting licenses and with the WDFW's watchable wildlife decal. Revenue from the sale of Vehicle Use Permits must be used by the WDFW for the stewardship and maintenance of improved access facilities.

The Department of Licensing (DOL) offers three wildlife specialty license plates and personalized license plates.

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: Persons with a motor vehicle displaying a Washington's Wildlife, Wild on Washington, Endangered Wildlife, or a personalized license plate authorized by DOL do not need to display a current Vehicle Use Permit when using WDFW improved access facilities.

The cost of the Vehicle Use Permit issued by WDFW is increased in steps from \$10 to \$30. The cost is raised from the current \$10 to \$20 until July 1, 2011. After that, the cost will increase to \$25 on July 2, 2011, and then to \$30 on July 1, 2013. A person may purchase a second Vehicle Use Permit for \$10 instead of the current \$5.

Revenues generated from the sale of the Vehicle Use Permit may be used for maintenance and physical improvements to land managed by WDFW.

WDFW is authorized to develop information that is accessible through its website that promotes outdoor recreational and wildlife viewing opportunities. The Fish and Wildlife Commission may adopt rules to limit the access to this internet information to individuals who purchase certain recreational licenses and Vehicle Use Permits. General information, as well as hunting and fishing regulations, must be accessible to the general public without having to purchase a license from WDFW.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

[OFM requested ten-year cost projection pursuant to I-960.]

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: The current price of \$10 to park at a WDFW site is extremely cheap. There are many people who enjoy the outdoors and are not required to contribute financially to the management of the habitat and facilities. This bill evens the playing field and presents an opportunity for individuals who enjoy walking and hiking, instead of hunting and fishing, to help fund recreational access. The WDFW strongly supports this legislation and sees this as balancing the increase in fees with the ability to maintain the almost million acres of lands and over 600 access sites for public use. The website improvements in this bill would provide an opportunity to enhance and produce a better product for people to access recreational information online.

OTHER: Back Country Horsemen understand the increase in fees but would like to be able to have an exemption to allow them free access for their volunteer work in maintaining trails.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Dunshee, prime sponsor; Steve Pozzanghera, WDFW.

OTHER: Terry Kohl, Back Country Horsemen of Washington.