

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5061

As of January 28, 2009

Title: An act relating to enhancing the natural resource collections at the Washington park arboretum.

Brief Description: Enhancing natural resource collections at the Washington park arboretum.

Sponsors: Senator Jacobsen.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Natural Resources, Ocean & Recreation: 1/28/09.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES, OCEAN & RECREATION

Staff: Sherry McNamara (786-7402)

Background: The Washington Park Arboretum (Arboretum) was established cooperatively by the University of Washington (UW) and the city of Seattle in 1934. The city of Seattle holds title to most of the property and the UW owns, designs, develops, and manages the collections at the Arboretum and the Botanic Gardens.

The UW Botanic Gardens is within the College of Forest Resources, and in turn, the Arboretum is housed within the Botanic Gardens. The 230-acre Arboretum contains approximately 20,000 trees, shrubs, and vines representing approximately 4,600 different species.

In 1981 the Legislature created the Natural Heritage Program (NHP) within the Department of Natural Resources to provide an objective, scientific approach to setting conservation priorities.

Summary of Bill: The Arboretum must strive to meet several goals set by the Legislature, including enhancing public appreciation for the aesthetic diversity of plants, providing education to students and the public regarding plants, and meeting conservation and maintenance standards.

The UW Botanic Gardens endowed curatorship (endowed curatorship) is established. The curator must focus on preservation, maintenance, and presentation of the Botanic Garden's collections and the goals set by the Legislature.

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.

The UW Botanic Gardens endowed curatorship account (account) is created in the custody of the State Treasurer. The State Treasurer must release money in the account to the UW Board of Regents for inclusion in the UW Consolidated Endowment Fund when the UW Board of Regents determines that it can match the state funds requested with an equal amount of non-state funds. Distributions from the Consolidated Endowment Fund resulting from this investment must be used solely for the purposes of the endowed curatorship.

The NHP must host a working conference on the future of arboretums and botanic gardens in Washington. The NHP must work with appropriate arboretums, botanic gardens, and interested public and private entities in preparing for and conducting the conference. The conference should address such issues as the challenges facing arboretums and botanic gardens, strategies for addressing these challenges, and recommendations on how the state and local governments might assist arboretums and botanic gardens. The NHP must submit a summary of the conference proceedings to the Legislature by December 15, 2009.

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: In 1995 the Legislature declared the Washington Park Arboretum as the official arboretum of the state. In 1993 the curator position was eliminated during budget cuts. The duties and role of the curator are essential to the nationally-renowned living plant collection which includes over 10,000 specimens including 240 state champion trees. The Arboretum has over 320,000 visitors a year and the curator provides the needed education and outreach to not only the public but to students and young people who are interested in learning about our trees and plants. Restoring the curator position is vital for the future of the Arboretum.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Fred Hoyt, University of Washington Botanic Garden; Kjristine Lund, citizen and member of Arboretum and Botanical Garden Committee.