

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5138

As of February 26, 2009

Title: An act relating to an integrated climate change response strategy.

Brief Description: Creating an integrated climate change response strategy.

Sponsors: Senators Rockefeller, Ranker, Jacobsen, Shin, Kohl-Welles, Kline and Pridemore.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Environment, Water & Energy: 2/13/09, 2/20/09 [DPS-WM, DNP].
Ways & Means: 2/27/09.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT, WATER & ENERGY

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5138 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Rockefeller, Chair; Pridemore, Vice Chair; Fraser, Hatfield, Ranker and Sheldon.

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senators Honeyford, Ranking Minority Member; Delvin, Holmquist and Morton.

Staff: Jan Odano (786-7486)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Staff: Maria Hovde (786-7710)

Background: There are two primary approaches for addressing climate change: mitigation and adaptation. Mitigation includes strategies such as reducing the amount of greenhouse gases emissions and carbon sequestration. Adaptation and preparation includes activities to maintain natural and human systems under climate stress.

The impacts of climate change vary by location. For instance, the U.S. Southwest may experience greater drought and higher temperatures, whereas in many other regions there may be increased precipitation. The Northwest is projected to have more winter flooding and reduced summer stream flows, which would impact irrigation, fish, and hydropower.

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.

Decreased water availability may bring drought conditions that would exacerbate forest fire hazards, extend the fire season, and increase fire danger in areas already subject to fires. The impacts of climate change may also affect businesses and local economies. Farming, forestry, water resources, tourism, and transportation could suffer losses. The National Conference of Legislatures states that climate change may be costly to states, which will vary depending on the sectors that the state relies upon.

Executive Order 0-02, Washington Climate Change Challenge, directed the Departments of Ecology (Ecology) and Community, Trade & Economic Development to develop recommendations for specific steps that should be taken to prepare for the impact of climate change and to propose strategies for climate change preparation and adaptation. Through the Climate Action Team (CAT), the Preparation and Adaptation Working Groups (PAWGs) were formed. The PAWGs were structured around five sectors: agriculture, forestry resources, human health, water resources and quality, and coastal infrastructure. The PAWGs began an initial assessment of opportunities to prepare and adapt to climate change. They identified several recurring themes including that early actions are needed while scientific knowledge is improved; impact of climate change on water resources has broad economic consequences; there are biological and social implications across all sectors; there is a need to restore and maintain ecosystems; preparation and adaptation activities must recognize the variability of potential impacts of climate change on sectors and geographic areas within the state; some populations are affected disproportionately; and preparation and adaptation is costly. The CAT scope of work in 2008 did not include further development of recommendations for preparation and adaptation. However, the CAT recommends that efforts should be renewed and include a coordinated multi-agency and sector effort to provide tools, resources, and information to governments, businesses, and citizens. These tools, resources, and information are necessary to make informed planning decisions, to protect and restore natural systems, and to adjust the provision of basic services as necessary due to climate change.

Summary of Bill (Recommended Substitute): The Departments of Ecology (Ecology), Natural Resources (DNR), Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), and Transportation (DOT), are the lead agencies for assessing and gathering information needed to develop a comprehensive and coordinated climate change adaptation strategy. Ecology must consult and collaborate with the departments in the development of the strategy and actions to prepare for and adapt to climate change impacts. Ecology serves as the central clearinghouse for scientific and technical information about the impacts of climate change to the economy, environment, and society. Each department has its own focus: DNR on forest health issues; WDFW on biodiversity, resiliency and vulnerability of the natural environments; and DOT on infrastructure projects, and vulnerability of the built environment.

An integrated climate change response strategy must be developed for state and local entities, public and private businesses, nongovernmental organizations, and individuals to prepare for and to adapt and address the impacts of climate change. The strategy must include prioritized and coordinated preparation and adaptation activities to assist with planning and preparing for the impacts of climate change. The strategy should address the impact of climate change, adaptation to climate change, as well as the regional capacity to undertake climate change preparation and adaptation activities, existing ecosystem and resource management issues, and health and economic risks. The strategy must summarize the best

known science on climate change impacts to the state, assess the state's vulnerability to identified climate change impacts, prioritize solutions, and identify recommended funding mechanisms.

In developing the strategy, the departments may seek assistance from a science advisory group (SAG), as well as consult with other state, federal, and local agencies with expertise in matters relating to climate change. The SAG must provide independent, nonrepresentational scientific advice. Ecology must request the Washington Academy of Sciences to provide a list of candidates for membership to the SAG to the chair of the group. The chair of the SAG may also seek advice from the scientific community to develop membership for the SAG.

State agencies should incorporate adaptation plans of action as priority activities when developing agency policies or programs. Agencies must consider the strategy when designing, planning, and funding infrastructure projects; and must consider incorporating natural resource adaptation actions and alternative energy sources when designing and planning infrastructure projects.

EFFECT OF CHANGES MADE BY ENVIRONMENT, WATER & ENERGY COMMITTEE (Recommended Substitute): Streamlines the group developing the strategy to four state agencies and extends the completion date for the final strategy to 2013.

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 (Environment, Water & Energy):
PRO: This proactive approach is necessary to provide a coordinated strategy that will gather valuable information necessary to prepare for climate change. This bill allows for climate change coordination among agencies and also contains a key provision of public education. It is critical for these activities to go forward. Climate change affects every action of WDFW.

Persons Testifying (Environment, Water & Energy): PRO: Nancy Boyd, WSDOT; Dave Siburg, Kitsap PUD; Dan Cheney, Pacific Shellfish Institute; Patty Glick, National Wildlife Federation; Bridget Moran, WDFW; Craig Partridge, DNR; Bill Robinson, The Nature Conservancy; Spencer Reeder, Ecology.