

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5596

As of February 6, 2009

Title: An act relating to promoting safe winter recreation by supporting the continued operation of the northwest weather and avalanche center.

Brief Description: Supporting the continued operation of the northwest weather and avalanche center.

Sponsors: Senator Jacobsen.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Transportation: 2/03/09.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Staff: Janice Baumgardt (786-7319)

Background: The Northwest Weather and Avalanche Center (Center) provides avalanche forecasting and education services and other valuable information for the public. It is funded jointly by federal, state, and private entities.

Annual registration fees for snowmobiles and other revenues go into the Snowmobile Account. The Snowmobile Account is an appropriated account that must be used by the Parks and Recreation Commission (Commission) for administering the snowmobile program and assisting and advising the Commission in planned development of snowmobile facilities and programs.

Fees for winter recreational area parking permits are set by the Commission and go into the Winter Recreation Program Account. Registered snowmobile owners are to get the permits free of charge. Funds in the Winter Recreation Program Account may only be appropriated to the Commission for non-snowmobile winter recreation purposes.

Summary of Bill: The Northwest Weather and Avalanche Center (NWAC) Account is created. The account is appropriated and may only be used to support the Center. A \$2 surcharge on snowmobile registration fees and winter recreational area parking permits is created which is to go into this account. It is the intent of the Legislature that the resources created by this act are not to supplant current support from the state.

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 Commission is directed to collaborate with appropriate entities to seek sustainable and cooperative funding for the Center with equitable contributions from the federal government, appropriate states, and private sources.

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 NWAC saves lives and this bill helps provide a more permanent funding source to keep the center open.

CON: It would be inequitable to require snowmobile owners to contribute more than they already are to the NWAC.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Tom Oliva, State Parks; Benk Wadsworth, Friends of NWAC.

CON: Daniel Fallstrom; Washington State Snowmobile Association; Ken Guza, citizen.