

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSJM 8004

As Passed House:
April 7, 2011

Brief Description: Requesting the reestablishment of the road leading to the upper Stehekin Valley within the North Cascades National Park.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Natural Resources & Marine Waters (originally sponsored by Senators Parlette, Nelson, Tom, Zarelli, Fraser, Hewitt, Kline, Hatfield, Murray and Shin).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Environment: 3/8/11, 3/24/11 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 4/7/11, 83-9.

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Requests the federal government to cooperate with the state in the reestablishment of North Cascades National Park's Upper Stehekin Valley Road.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 10 members: Representatives Upthegrove, Chair; Short, Ranking Minority Member; Harris, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Jinkins, Morris, Moscoso, Nealey, Pearson, Takko and Taylor.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 3 members: Representatives Rolfes, Vice Chair; Fitzgibbon and Tharinger.

Staff: Jason Callahan (786-7117).

Background:

The North Cascades National Park Complex was established in 1968 and contains three park units that are all managed as one. These park units are: North Cascades National Park; Ross Lake; and Lake Chelan National Recreation Area. These protected lands are united by a

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contiguous overlay of Stephen Mather Wilderness, which was established by Congress in 1988 in the Washington State Wilderness Act.

The town of Stehekin is located at the end of Lake Chelan and accessible only by boat, floatplane, or on foot. The Stehekin Valley Road was originally built as a wagon road in 1899 and runs over 20 miles from the lake into the national park. It provides access to Stephen Mather Wilderness trailheads and North Cascades National Park from the Lake Chelan National Recreation Area.

The National Park Services has made the lower portion of the road accessible to vehicles but the upper portion of the road is closed. Part of the upper portion was damaged in a 1995 flood, and more of the road was washed out when the Stehekin River flooded in October 2003.

Summary of Bill:

The state House of Representatives and state Senate requests that the United States Congress, the United States Department of the Interior, and the National Park Service work cooperatively with the State of Washington to reestablish the Upper Stehekin Valley Road. The road is located within the North Cascades National Park.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) The federal government has been considering the rebuilding of the Upper Stehekin Valley Road and the joint memorial will allow the state to weigh in on the proposal. Past experience shows that joint memorials are taken seriously and help the federal process. The purpose of the joint memorial is to encourage the federal government to get the road rebuilt. Currently, only the most fit and physically able can access the North Cascades National Park from the town of Stehekin. A rebuilt road will allow more access to a primitive area in the state, and if taxpayers are to be asked to fund wilderness areas, they must be given a means for experiencing it.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Senator Parlette, prime sponsor.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.