

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 1084

As of April 11, 2011

Title: An act relating to creating the board on geographic names.

Brief Description: Creating the board on geographic names.

Sponsors: House Committee on State Government & Tribal Affairs (originally sponsored by Representatives McCoy and Hunt).

Brief History: Passed House: 3/03/11, 58-40.

Committee Activity: Natural Resources & Marine Waters: 3/17/11.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES & MARINE WATERS

Staff: Sherry McNamara (786-7402)

Background: Board on Geographic Names. The Legislature established the Washington State Board on Geographic Names (BGN) in 1983. The purpose of the BGN was to:

- establish a procedure for the retention and formal recognition of existing geographical names;
- standardize the procedures for naming or renaming geographical features within the state;
- identify a responsible agency to coordinate geographic names among local, state, and federal agencies;
- avoid duplication of names for similar features; and
- retain the significance, spelling, and color of names associated with the early history of Washington.

Membership on the BGN included the State Librarian, or a designee; the Commissioner of Public Lands (Commissioner), or a designee; the chairperson of the Washington State Heritage Council; and four members of the general public appointed by the Commissioner.

In 2010 the Legislature eliminated the BGN.

Board of Natural Resources. The Board of Natural Resources (Board) serves various functions in state government. It is primarily known as the administrative entity responsible for policies relating to the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and state trust land

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management. However, the Board also serves as the state's constitutionally required Commission on Harbor Lines and Board of Appraisers.

Membership includes the Governor, or a designee; the Superintendent of Public Instruction; the Commissioner; the Director of the University of Washington School of Forest Resources; the Dean of the Washington State University College of Agricultural, Human, and Natural Resources Sciences; and a representative of those counties that contain state forest lands.

Summary of Bill: The Board will serve as the BGN. The BGN has the following duties:

- establish the official names for the lakes, mountains, streams, places, towns, and other geographic features within the state;
- assign names to lakes, mountains, streams, places, towns, and other geographical features in the state for which no generally accepted name has been used;
- cooperate with county commissioners, state departments, agencies, the Legislature, and the United States Board on Geographic Names to establish, change, or determine the appropriate names for the purposes of eliminating any duplications of place names;
- serve as the state's liaison with the United States Board on Geographic Names; and
- establish policies to carry out the act.

The BGN must establish a Committee on Geographic Names (Committee) to assist the Board in performing its duties. Membership on the committee must include the Commissioner; the State Librarian; the Director of the Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation; a representative of the Washington state tribes; and three members from the public.

The Committee is required to hold at least two meetings a year and may hold special meetings as called by the chair or a majority of the members. The Committee may adopt and enforce rules to carry out its duties.

The Committee is required to make reports and recommendations to the BGN following each meeting. Recommendations regarding adoption of names may only be made after consideration at two Committee meetings.

The BGN must consider the recommendations made by the Committee for adoption of names and must either adopt the name as recommended or refer the matter back to the Committee for further review. Names adopted by the BGN must be published in the Washington State Register.

Secretarial and administrative support for the BGN is to be provided by DNR.

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: The department recognizes the importance of the BGN; however, it is also important to make sure that the Board of Natural Resources' funds are not used for the administrative support required in the bill. The BGN plays a vital role in seeking out the local history, perspective, and knowledge of a particular place, and they have the ability to sift through the information to then determine what might be an appropriate name. We should not cede our power to the federal government to name our places. Washington is the only state that currently does not have a BGN. The BGN allows access for our citizens to be heard.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Craig Partridge, DNR; Anita Latch, Robert Satiacum, Spirit of the Red Road; Maria Trevizo, Putnam Barber citizen; Zoltan Grossman, The Evergreen State College.