

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5249

As of February 9, 2011

Title: An act relating to consolidating fish and wildlife officers into the Washington state patrol.

Brief Description: Consolidating fish and wildlife officers into the Washington state patrol.

Sponsors: Senators Haugen, Swecker and Shin.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Transportation: 2/02/11.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Staff: Amanda Cecil (786-7429)

Background: The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) currently houses an enforcement program, which is primarily responsible for enforcing laws focused on fish, wildlife, habitat, and public safety. For the 2009-2011 biennium, the enforcement division estimates 146 full time equivalent employees. Approximately 84 percent of the staff in the enforcement program are commissioned officers that engage in fish and wildlife enforcement activities. The remaining 16 percent are non-commissioned staff that provide support functions to enforcement activities. Total funding for the same period is estimated to be \$36.4 million. These activities are funded primarily from the State Wildlife Account but also receive funding from state, local, and federal general funds; the state's Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account; and the Fish & Wildlife Enforcement Rewards Account.

Summary of Bill: Fish and wildlife enforcement authorities, duties and personnel are transferred from WDFW to the Washington State Patrol (WSP), effective July 1, 2012.

The Chief of WSP, in consultation with WDFW, will establish a transition plan that identifies the personnel to be transferred; addresses personnel issues related to the transfer; and identifies facilitates, property, equipment, records, contracts, and funding to be transferred. The transition plan is to be submitted to the appropriate legislative committee by November 1, 2011.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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.

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: WSP and wildlife enforcement officers work closely together. This a similar concept to the Office of the Fire Chief within the State Patrol, which is its own autonomous bureau.

CON: This is not the area of expertise of WSP and risks diluting the mission of both organizations. It is beneficial to keep the enforcement of fish and wildlife in the agency that oversees these activities. The Alaska and Oregon systems that are combined do not work.

OTHER: There are costs associated with the transfer and they would like to see those funds used to expand the existing program. Being in the Law Enforcement Retirement System, unlike WSP, they are able to recruit from local agencies and laterally transfer officers in.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Rick Jensen, WSP Troopers Association.

CON: Tony L Wells, Eyes in the Woods; Mark James, Washington Federation of State Employees Local 881; Don Pierce, Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs; Sheriff John Snaza, Thurston County; Sheriff Casey Salisbury, Mason County; Ed Owens, Coalition of Coastal Fisheries, Hunters Heritage Council; Teresa Mosqueda, Washington Labor Council; Matt Nixon, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife Sergeants Association and Teamsters 760; Alia Griffing, Washington Federation of State Employees.

OTHER: Bruce Bjork, WDFW.