

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6044

As of January 17, 2012

Title: An act relating to the supply of water by public utility districts bordered by the Columbia river to be used in, or power from, pumped storage projects.

Brief Description: Concerning the supply of water by public utility districts bordered by the Columbia river to be used in, or power from, pumped storage projects.

Sponsors: Senator Honeyford.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Energy, Natural Resources & Marine Waters: 1/16/12.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY, NATURAL RESOURCES & MARINE WATERS

Staff: William Bridges (786-7416)

Background: Public Utility Districts (PUDs). Formed in 1931 by Initiative 1, PUDs are municipal corporations authorized to provide electricity, water and sewer services, and wholesale telecommunications. There are 28 operating PUDs in Washington, 15 of which border the Columbia River. While PUDs are generally authorized to buy and sell electricity and water, they may not sell water to a privately owned utility for the production of electric energy.

Pumped Storage. Pumped storage projects generate electricity by moving water between two bodies of water at different elevations. During times of low electricity demand, less-expensive electricity is used to pump water to an upper reservoir, which is released during periods of high electricity demand to generate electricity in the same manner as a conventional hydropower facility.

Summary of Bill: Authorizing PUDs to Sell Water for Pumped Storage Projects. A PUD bordered by the Columbia River may supply the following resources to an entity that sells electricity or water to the public: electricity from a pumped storage generating facility or water to be used in a pumped storage generating facility. Among other conditions, contracts concerning the sale of these resources must be approved by a vote of a PUD's commissioners after a minimum of ten days public notice.

Appropriation: None.

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.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: Klickitat PUD owns the water right formerly held by the Goldendale aluminum plant, and PUD may use this water right for pump storage. PUD is planning on constructing a \$2-\$2.5 billion, 1000-1200 MW, pump storage project. The electricity supplied by the pump storage project will be used to balance the wind farms that are abundant in the Columbia Gorge. A pump storage project could also be used to absorb excess electricity produced during high wind events. The bill is needed to update restrictions in the law that are over 80 years old and have outlived their usefulness. The bill needs to pass this session in order for PUD to maintain its preliminary license from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission.

OTHER: There are concerns about the impact on other water rights in the area. Pump storage could be good for supplementing river flows to assist fish migration.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Honeyford, prime sponsor; Bill Clarke, WA Public Utility District Assn.; Randy Knowles, Klickitat PUD.

OTHER: Miguel Perez-Gibson, Colville Tribes.