
**Agriculture & Natural Resources
Committee**

HB 1924

Brief Description: Concerning watershed planning grants.

Sponsors: Representatives Tharinger, Van De Wege, Takko, Lytton, Fitzgibbon and Upthegrove.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Allows additional, match-free, later year local watershed planning grants of up to \$50,000 for lead entities or plan implementation groups that commit to conducting a review every five years to ensure that the highest priority issues are being addressed.
- Gives priority to funding watershed planning grant applications that would result in the dissolution of a planning unit if not for receiving the grant.

Hearing Date: 2/19/13

Staff: Jason Callahan (786-7117).

Background:

The Watershed Planning Act [Chapter 90.82 RCW] establishes a process through which local groups can develop and implement plans for managing and protecting local water resources and rights. The local groups authorized to develop watershed plans are organized by water resource inventory areas (WRIAs). A WRIA is, generally speaking, an area determined to be a distinct watershed.

There are 62 WRIAs identified by the Department of Ecology (Department). Each WRIA is identified by a number and may contain a local watershed planning group with an identified lead entity. Once constituted, a WRIA is eligible for grant funding from the Department. There are funding opportunities available for both planning and implementation.

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.

A grant of up to \$50,000 is available for the initial organization of a WRIA planning unit. Additional grants are available for watershed assessments, for the developing a watershed plan, and for other steps in the four phase process of watershed planning. In the fourth phase of watershed planning, the local planning unit is required to provide a 10 percent funding match.

The 62 WRIAs are not in the same stage of development. Some WRIAs are implementing their plans, while others have yet to form a local watershed group. There are WRIAs at various stages in between including: those that have an approved plan awaiting implementation; WRIAs still developing the local plan; WRIAs where the planning process has been terminated; and WRIAs with developed plans awaiting county approval.

Summary of Bill:

The phase four watershed planning grants requirement that a local planning unit must provide a 10 percent funding match is waived after the first five years. After the first five years, additional match-free grants of up to \$50,000 are available to local watershed planning groups. To be eligible for the additional grants, a lead entity or plan implementation group must commit to conducting a review every five years of the plan to ensure that the highest priority issues are being addressed.

Priority grant application funding is given to those which, if not receiving the grant, would result in the dissolution of a planning unit.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 15, 2013.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.