

HOUSE BILL REPORT

EHB 2636

As Passed House:
February 18, 2014

Title: An act relating to streamlining statutorily required environmental reports by government entities.

Brief Description: Streamlining statutorily required environmental reports by government entities.

Sponsors: Representatives Smith, Tarleton and Morrell; by request of Department of Ecology.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Environment: 1/29/14, 2/4/14 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/18/14, 94-4.

Brief Summary of Engrossed Bill

- Eliminates certain Department of Ecology (DOE) periodic reports to the Legislature.
- Requires the online posting of certain DOE program information in lieu of periodic reporting to the Legislature.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 12 members: Representatives Fitzgibbon, Chair; Senn, Vice Chair; Short, Ranking Minority Member; Pike, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Farrell, Fey, Harris, Kagi, Morris, Nealey, Ortiz-Self and Tharinger.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 1 member: Representative Overstreet.

Staff: Jacob Lipson (786-7196).

Background:

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.

The Department of Ecology (DOE) is responsible for the administration of a long list of statutes that affect the state's environment. The DOE's administrative responsibilities include the management of air quality, water resources, recycling, waste reduction and reuse, and many other environmental programs. Statutes that establish the DOE's program management responsibilities include a variety of procedural and administrative requirements. Many of these statutes also include a requirement for the agency to periodically report to the Legislature or the Governor on program activities.

Summary of Engrossed Bill:

The following reports to the Legislature are eliminated entirely:

- the DOE aquatic algae control report;
- a DOE report on local government waste reduction, litter, and recycling programs funded through the DOE;
- the DOE and local air authority periodic reports on air operating programs;
- the DOE biennial report on watershed planning activities;
- an annual DOE tire recycling report; and
- an annual report on the availability of cars that meet state-adopted California motor vehicle emission standards.

The following reports or information must now be posted online, rather than submitted to the Legislature:

- the statewide waste reduction, litter control, and recycling report;
- the DOE biennial report on waste tire pile cleanup, which is also reduced in comprehensiveness;
- information on biosolid permitting;
- information on water banking;
- information on a Whitman County pilot project that exempts domestic water use for certain clustered residential development from groundwater permitting; and
- information on water conservancy board activities; and
- the DOE and local air authority periodic reports on air operating programs;

Other changes to existing program and reporting requirements include:

- The statewide litter survey is conducted periodically rather than biennially.
- Requirements are eliminated for other state agencies to periodically report certain litter collection information to the DOE.
- Statutory language is removed which describes an outdated status report on greenhouse gas emission labeling for vehicles sold in Washington and outdated status reports on watershed planning.
- A biennial stormwater center progress report to the Legislature is eliminated, and the DOE and stormwater center partners are instead directed to inform legislative committees of program progress.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) Reports should not be required if nobody really wants to read them. This helps reduce the administrative burden on the DOE. Many of these reports were important in the early days after they were passed, but have since lost their relevance, even though they are still required by statute. Producing a report takes a lot of work, including a review process in the Office of the Governor. Information that is contained in reports to the Legislature is often equally or more useful when simply posted on the DOE's website.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Smith, prime sponsor; and Tom Clingman, Department of Ecology.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.