

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## ESB 5097

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### As Reported by House Committee On: Environment

**Title:** An act relating to allowing spouses to combine volunteer hours for purposes of receiving a complimentary discover pass.

**Brief Description:** Allowing spouses to combine volunteer hours for purposes of receiving a complimentary discover pass.

**Sponsors:** Senators Becker, Pearson, Bailey, Hatfield, Holmquist Newbry, Tom, Schoesler, Rivers, Honeyford, Padden, Roach and Parlette.

#### **Brief History:**

##### **Committee Activity:**

Community Development, Housing & Tribal Affairs: 3/6/13, 3/19/13 [DP].

Environment: 2/19/14, 2/26/14 [DPA].

#### **Brief Summary of Engrossed Bill (As Amended by Committee)**

- Allows a married couple to combine their volunteer service hours in order to meet the 24 hours of volunteer time required to earn a complimentary Discover Pass during the 2015 and 2016 calendar years.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT

**Majority Report:** Do pass as amended. 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, Overstreet and Tharinger.

**Staff:** Jason Callahan (786-7117).

#### **Background:**

A public access pass is required to be displayed on any vehicle accessing a state park or recreational lands managed by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) or the

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Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW). The pass must either be a Discover Pass or a Vehicle Access Pass. A Discover Pass costs \$30 for an annual pass or \$10 for a day-use pass. The Vehicle Access Pass is available free of charge to anyone who purchases certain hunting or fishing licenses and only allows access to lands managed by the DFW. All public access passes must display the license plate number of the vehicle accessing the recreational land.

One free Discover Pass can be earned by any person who performs at least 24 hours of volunteer service that benefits state recreational lands. The volunteer service must be sanctioned by one of the agencies.

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**Summary of Bill:**

The State Parks and Recreation Commission (SPRC), the DNR, and the DFW must allow married spouses to combine the hours volunteered on sanctioned projects to count towards the fulfillment of the 24 hours needed to earn a complimentary Discover Pass. This direction only applies during the 2015 and 2016 calendar years.

The SPRC, the DNR, and the DFW must jointly report to the Legislature information relating to the two years during which spouses can combine volunteer hours. This information must include, at a minimum, the number of complimentary Discover Passes issued under combined vouchers, an estimate of lost revenue to the Recreation Access Pass Account, and a recommendation as to whether a policy to allow married spouses to combine volunteer hours should be extended or modified.

**Amended Bill Compared to Engrossed Bill:**

The striking amendment limits the policy outcome from the underlying bill to a two-year time period and requires the agencies responsible for administering the Discover Pass to report back to the Legislature on the outcomes of the policy.

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**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

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

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:**

(In support) Allowing spouses to combine volunteer hours towards a free Discover Pass will encourage volunteerism. Even if less Discover Passes are sold due to this change in law, the benefit of extremely low cost labor to the agencies will more than offset those losses.

(With concerns) The SPRC is a cash-strapped agency that relies on volunteer labor. Allowing the consolidation of hours will decrease the incentive for a family to volunteer over 24 hours. These families likely have more than one car. Allowing consolidated hours for only married couples creates an inequity for other couples and households who are not married.

Every free Discover Pass decreases revenue to the SPRC. So far, around 1,000 free Discover Passes have been given away to volunteers and allowing the consolidation of hours would increase that number. The administrative complexity involved with tracking family volunteer hours would increase costs.

(Opposed) None.

**Persons Testifying:** (In support) Tod Petersen, Northwest Motorcycle Association and Washington Off Highway Vehicle Alliance; and Daniel Farber, Washington State Parks.

(With concerns) Terri McCullough, Washington Federation of State Employees.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** None.