
SECOND SUBSTITUTE SENATE BILL 5219

State of Washington

63rd Legislature

2013 Regular Session

By Senate Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Honeyford, Hatfield, Smith, Schoesler, Delvin, and Hewitt)

READ FIRST TIME 03/01/13.

1 AN ACT Relating to retaining water resources to assure the vitality
2 of local economies; adding new sections to chapter 90.42 RCW; and
3 creating a new section.

4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature finds that purchase of lands
6 by state agencies for less intensive economic uses may affect the
7 economic vitality of local communities by reducing essential water
8 resources necessary to retain economic activity of the area. The
9 legislature finds that a number of parcels of land purchased by state
10 agencies have water rights appurtenant to them. The legislature
11 continues to support agency efforts to allow continued use of portions
12 of land parcels that contribute to the local economy by actions such as
13 leasing back irrigated parcels to local producers for continued
14 production of food and other agricultural commodities. The legislature
15 finds that the economies in many rural areas of the state have declined
16 and are in need of retaining water resources to prevent further
17 decline.

18 The purpose of this act is to establish a process to retain water
19 rights when they are no longer used on state purchased lands and to

1 make this resource available for alternate uses to continue to support
2 the local economy, jobs, and the tax base rather than be permanently
3 lost to the economy of the area through relinquishment under chapter
4 90.14 RCW.

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 90.42 RCW
6 to read as follows:

7 (1) Within existing appropriations, the department of fish and
8 wildlife, the parks and recreation commission, and the department of
9 natural resources shall each maintain an inventory of water rights
10 appurtenant to lands purchased by their agencies. At least once each
11 year, each agency shall review and record whether all or a portion of
12 the water right for each of these lands purchased by the agency has
13 been beneficially used. If the agency does not plan on continuing
14 beneficial use of all or a portion of the water right on the state-
15 owned lands, or if all or a portion of a particular water right has
16 been unused during the prior four-consecutive-year period, the agency
17 shall commence the process of transferring the unused portion of the
18 water right to the local economy trust water account established in
19 this chapter. Before the end of the fifth year of nonuse of all or a
20 portion of the water rights, the transfer must be completed and the
21 water right shall be temporarily held by the department of ecology
22 until the water right is transferred to another beneficial use as
23 provided in subsection (3) of this section.

24 (2) If an agency has commenced the process of transferring all or
25 a portion of a water right as required under subsection (1) of this
26 section, but subsequently placed the water right to beneficial use on
27 the state-owned land before the end of the fifth year, and plans to
28 continue to fully use the water right in subsequent years, the agency
29 shall notify the department of ecology to terminate the transfer of the
30 water right to the local economy trust water account.

31 (3) Water rights temporarily held by the department of ecology
32 under this section shall be available for transfer to a new use or uses
33 within the same WRIA as the original use, consistent with RCW 90.03.380
34 or 90.44.100, as appropriate. Once a water right is transferred to the
35 local economy trust water account and the department has completed a
36 trust water agreement and identified the area of suitability for
37 transfer consistent with chapter 90.38 or 90.44 RCW, the department

1 must provide notification that a water right may be available to the
2 person who filed an application for a new water right under chapter
3 90.03 or 90.44 RCW as appropriate, based on whose water right
4 appropriation is next in line for processing within the area of
5 suitability for transfer within the WRIA.

6 (4)(a) A request to transfer the water right may be processed if:

7 (i) The applicant responds to the department within thirty calendar
8 days; and

9 (ii) The applicant agrees to pay the department's costs associated
10 with placing the new water supplies into the local economy trust water
11 account and completing the transfer from the local economy trust water
12 account to the applicant's new use.

13 (b) If the thirty-day period elapses and an affirmative written
14 response is not received from the applicant by the department, the
15 department shall provide the notice to the next applicant in line in
16 accordance with subsection (3) of this section.

17 (5) If the department has not issued a permit within three years of
18 the date that the water right was transferred into the local economy
19 trust water account, the department shall submit a written report to
20 the standing committees of the legislature with jurisdiction over water
21 right matters, and to the legislators representing the area in which
22 the original water right was used providing the reasons for the failure
23 to approve a transfer of the water right to a new use.

24 (6) If a person does not indicate an interest in obtaining a water
25 right from the local economy trust water account, it does not affect
26 the standing of the original water right application.

27 (7) This section does not apply to properties with deed
28 restrictions in conflict with this section or where application of this
29 section would otherwise violate law.

30 (8) The provisions of this section and section 3 of this act apply
31 to all WRIAs in the state.

32 (9) This section does not apply to nonconsumptive water rights used
33 by fish hatcheries and associated rearing ponds, or to water rights
34 associated with permit-exempt wells established under RCW 90.44.050.

35 (10) This section does not apply to state lands as defined in RCW
36 79.02.010, managed by the department of natural resources, or to state
37 forest lands as defined in RCW 79.02.010.

1 (11) As used in this section and section 3 of this act, "WRIA"
2 means a water resource inventory area established in chapter 173-500
3 WAC.

4 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** A new section is added to chapter 90.42 RCW
5 to read as follows:

6 (1) If the agency's nonuse of a water right meets any of the
7 sufficient cause exceptions listed in RCW 90.14.140(1), the agency is
8 not required to place that specific unused water into the local economy
9 trust water account.

10 (2) Upon the transfer of a water right under section 2(1) of this
11 act, the department shall establish a local economy trust water account
12 for the WRIA in which the water right had been used. The department
13 shall place and hold the water right in the account pending completion
14 of a transfer to another beneficial use as provided in this section and
15 section 2 of this act.

16 (3) The department may transfer all or a portion of a water right
17 held in the local economy trust water account to a new water use
18 identified through the process in section 2 of this act upon occurrence
19 of all of the following:

20 (a) The department receives a request from a qualified applicant
21 identified pursuant to section 2 of this act for transfer of a water
22 right or portion thereof; and

23 (b) The request is reviewed and approved under RCW 90.03.380 or
24 90.44.100, as applicable, for the new beneficial use or uses. The
25 department may not authorize the use of a water right if it causes
26 detriment or injury to existing rights.

27 (4) The priority date of the water right or portion thereof
28 transferred by the department from the local economy trust water
29 account shall be the priority date of the underlying water right that
30 had been transferred into the local economy trust water account, but as
31 between the underlying water right and the new transferred right, the
32 underlying water right shall be deemed to be senior in priority unless
33 otherwise specified by agreement between the agency holding the
34 underlying water right and the new water right holder.

35 (5) The department shall issue documentation for that water right
36 or portion thereof to the new water right holder based on the
37 requirements applicable to the transfer of other water rights from the

1 trust water program, as provided under this chapter or chapter 90.38
2 RCW, as applicable. Documentation must include a description of the
3 property to which the water right will be appurtenant after the water
4 right or portion thereof is transferred from local economy trust water
5 account to the new water right holder.

6 (6) The department's decision on the transfer of a water right or
7 portion thereof from the local economy trust water account may be
8 appealed to the pollution control hearings board under RCW 43.21B.230
9 or to a superior court conducting a general adjudication under RCW
10 90.03.210.

11 (7) Notice of application for transfer of a water right under this
12 section must be published by the applicant as provided under RCW
13 90.03.380. The department must provide electronic notice and
14 opportunity to comment to affected local governments and affected
15 federally recognized tribal governments before initiating use of the
16 local economy trust water account for the first time in a WRIA.

17 (8) Water rights are not subject to loss by statutory
18 relinquishment under RCW 90.14.130 through 90.14.200 while such water
19 rights are:

20 (a) Waiting for a final determination from the department on a
21 change or transfer application filed under RCW 90.03.250, 90.03.380, or
22 90.44.100;

23 (b) In a local economy trust water account while being held by the
24 department as a trust water right under this chapter or chapter 90.38
25 RCW; or

26 (c) Within a construction or development schedule period granted in
27 the approved water right transfer document or any development schedule
28 granted under RCW 90.03.320 for the new water right holder to place the
29 water to beneficial use.

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