
Public Safety Committee

HB 2765

Brief Description: Clarifying the limited authority of park rangers.

Sponsors: Representatives Kretz, Moscoso, Griffey, Hayes and Holy.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Gives the State Park and Recreation Commission police powers to enforce the laws of Washington within the boundaries of any state park, in winter recreation facilities, on certain public properties surrounding a state park, in response to an emergency involving an immediate threat to human life or property, in response to the request of a law enforcement officer, when in fresh pursuit, or upon the consent of a sheriff or chief of police.

Hearing Date: 1/27/16

Staff: Yvonne Walker (786-7841).

Background:

The State Parks and Recreation Commission (Commission) is classified by statute as a limited authority Washington law enforcement agency. The Washington parks system includes more than 100 developed parks, recreation programs, trails, boating safety and winter recreation. The Commission is charged, in part, with enforcing the state laws on public recreational lands. The Commission may adopt policies and enforce rules pertaining to the use, care, and administration of state parks and parkways.

Park rangers go through a training course developed by the Commission and are vested with police powers to enforce Washington laws.

Limited Authority Agency.

A limited authority Washington law enforcement agency is any agency, political subdivision, or unit of local government of Washington, and any agency, department, or division of state

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government, having as one of its functions the apprehension or detection of persons committing infractions or violating the traffic or criminal laws relating to limited subject areas, including but not limited to, the departments of Natural Resources, Social and Health Services, Gambling Commission, Lottery Commission, State Parks and Recreation Commission, Utilities and Transportation Commission, Liquor and Cannabis Board, Office of the Insurance Commissioner, and Corrections.

A limited authority Washington peace officer is any full-time, fully compensated officer of a limited authority Washington law enforcement agency empowered by that agency to detect or apprehend violators of the laws in some or all of the limited subject areas for which that agency is responsible. A limited authority Washington peace officer may be a specially commissioned Washington peace officer.

Fresh pursuit includes, without limitation, fresh pursuit as defined by the common law. Fresh pursuit does not necessarily imply immediate pursuit, but pursuit without unreasonable delay.

Summary of Bill:

The Commission is authorized to enforce all the laws of Washington:

- within the boundaries of any state park, including lands owned or managed by the Commission under lease or other agreement;
- in winter recreation facilities established and administered by the Commission;
- on public properties immediately surrounding a state park up to one mile from the boundary, for violations impacting park visitor safety or resource protection;
- throughout the state, in response to an emergency involving an immediate threat to human life or property;
- in response to the request of a peace officer with enforcement authority;
- when in fresh pursuit; or
- upon the prior written consent of the sheriff or chief of police within whose primary territorial jurisdiction the exercise of police powers occur.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Preliminary fiscal note available.

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