
**Agriculture & Natural Resources
Committee**

SSB 5705

Brief Description: Establishing a mineral prospecting and mining advisory committee.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Natural Resources & Parks (originally sponsored by Senators Ericksen, Sheldon, Pearson, Becker, Bailey, Warnick and Padden).

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Requires the Fish and Wildlife Commission to establish and maintain an advisory committee that represents the interests of small scale mineral prospectors and miners.

Hearing Date: 3/18/15

Staff: Jason Callahan (786-7117).

Background:

Hydraulic Project Approvals.

A person must obtain a hydraulic project approval (HPA) prior to commencing any construction project that will use, divert, obstruct, or change the natural flow or bed of any of the salt or fresh waters of the state. Hydraulic project approvals are issued by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) to ensure the proper protection of fish life. To receive a HPA, the applicant must provide certain information to the WDFW. This information includes general plans for the overall project and complete plans for the proper protection of fish life.

Until June 30, 2017, most applicants for a HPA are required to pay a \$150 application fee. Exemptions to the fee are provided to projects located above the ordinary high water line, pamphlet HPAs, all HPAs processed under an applicant-funded project, all HPAs related to forest practices or mineral prospecting, and all HPAs occurring on farm or agricultural land. The collected fees are retained by the WDFW for use in implementing the HPA program.

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.

Gold and Fish Pamphlet.

Small scale prospecting and mining activities are not required to be permitted by the WDFW with an individual HPA. Instead, the WDFW maintains rules for small scale prospecting and mining which are published in the "Gold and Fish Pamphlet." These rules describe small scale prospecting and mining activities that may be lawfully engaged in as long as the terms of the Gold and Fish Pamphlet are complied with.

Small scale prospecting is defined as discovering and recovering minerals using pans, non-motorized sluice boxes, concentrators, and mini-rocker boxes.

Summary of Bill:

The Fish and Wildlife Commission (Commission) must establish and maintain an advisory committee that represents the interests of small scale mineral prospectors and miners (advisory committee). The advisory committee must provide guidance to issues such as individual HPA processing, relevant rules and rule changes, and the Gold and Fish Pamphlet.

The Commission must appoint between 5 and 9 individuals to the advisory committee. In doing, the Commission must consult with and consider nominations from small scale mineral prospecting and mining groups.

The advisory committee must meet at least four times each year. Members of the advisory committee may not receive compensation for serving, but are eligible to be reimbursed for travel expenses.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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