

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5705

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Natural Resources & Parks, February 11, 2015

Title: An act relating to establishing a mineral prospecting and mining advisory committee.

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

Sponsors: Senators Ericksen, Sheldon, Pearson, Becker, Bailey, Warnick and Padden.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Natural Resources & Parks: 2/04/15, 2/11/15 [DPS].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES & PARKS

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5705 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Pearson, Chair; Dansel, Vice Chair; Hatfield, Ranking Minority Member; Chase, Hewitt, McAuliffe and Warnick.

Staff: Bonnie Kim (786-7316)

Background: Advisory Groups. The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) has advisory groups who provide input on a variety of topics, including game management, enforcement, and hatcheries. Committee members communicate the opinions and needs of stakeholders to the agency. Advisory group meetings are open to the public.

WDFW also works with management boards on topics like removing fish passage barriers. These boards coordinate with other agencies and interested parties on statewide approaches to resource conservation.

Hydraulic Project Approvals (HPAs), Generally. An HPA is required for any project that will use, divert, obstruct, or change the natural flow or bed of any of the salt or fresh waters of the state.

Summary of Bill (Recommended Substitute): The Fish and Wildlife Commission must establish and maintain an advisory committee of five to seven members to represent the interests of small-scale mineral prospectors and miners on issues such as individual HPA permit processing, relevant proposed rule changes, and the gold and fish pamphlet. The

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commission must consult with and consider membership nominations from appropriate small-scale mineral prospecting and mining groups. Each member of the advisory committee will serve without compensation but may be reimbursed for travel expenses. The committee must meet at least quarterly, and at other appropriate times to address emergent issues or proposed rule changes relevant to small-scale mineral prospecting and mining.

EFFECT OF CHANGES MADE BY NATURAL RESOURCES & PARKS COMMITTEE (Recommended Substitute): Clarifies that the advisory committee will represent the interests of small-scale mineral prospectors and miners or those individuals who use pans; nonmotorized sluice boxes; concentrators; and minirocker boxes for the discovery and recovery of minerals.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: Yes.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Original Bill: PRO: We have cooperated with WDFW before and have had success in negotiated satisfactory regulations. We have been left out of rulemaking and our lack of involvement might lead to more litigation. There are negative impacts when WDFW attempts to regulate an industry it is not familiar with. This bill gives mineral prospectors more of a voice. We want to work with the fish stakeholders because we are fishermen too and want to protect fish.

OTHER: We would like to have clarification as to whether this bill applies to larger or smaller-scale mining operations.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Mark Erickson, Resources Coalition; Jams Franklin, WA Prospectors Mining Assn.; William Thomas, Robert Cunningham, Harley Edwards, citizens.

OTHER: Bruce Chattin, WA Aggregates and Concrete Assn.