

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1113

As Reported by House Committee On:
Environment & Energy

Title: An act relating to amending state greenhouse gas emission limits for consistency with the most recent assessment of climate change science and with the United States' commitment under the 2015 Paris climate agreement.

Brief Description: Amending state greenhouse gas emission limits for consistency with the most recent assessment of climate change science and with the United States' commitment under the 2015 Paris climate agreement.

Sponsors: Representatives Slatter, Fitzgibbon, Fey, Doglio, Kloba, Peterson, Valdez, Ryu, Tharinger, Jenkins, Macri, Goodman, Cody, Bergquist, Pollet, Stanford, Santos, Frame, Ormsby, Walen and Robinson.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Environment & Energy: 1/15/19, 1/17/19, 1/31/19 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Modifies state greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets to 19 percent below 1990 levels by 2025, 40 percent below 1990 levels by 2035, and 80 percent below 1990 levels by 2050.
- Directs the Department of Ecology to include certain additional information in its biennial greenhouse gas emissions report to the Governor and the Legislature, including the quantity of greenhouse gas emissions from wildfires in the state, and the total and per capita greenhouse gas emissions from Washington and other states.
- Directs the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee to submit to the Legislature by June 30, 2020, and every five years thereafter, an analysis of the economic impact, whether positive or negative, and the impact on jobs, whether positive or negative, resulting from the greenhouse gas emissions reductions specified in the act.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT & ENERGY

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.

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 7 members: Representatives Fitzgibbon, Chair; Lekanoff, Vice Chair; Doglio, Fey, Mead, Peterson and Shewmake.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 3 members: Representatives Dye, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Boehnke and DeBolt.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 1 member: Representative Shea, Ranking Minority Member.

Staff: Robert Hatfield (786-7117).

Background:

Federal and State Regulation of Greenhouse Gases.

The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Washington State Department of Ecology (Ecology) identify carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, hydrofluorocarbons, perfluorocarbons, and sulfur hexafluoride as greenhouse gases because of their capacity to trap heat in the Earth's atmosphere. Under the federal Clean Air Act, greenhouse gases are regulated as an air pollutant and are subject to several air regulations administered by the EPA. At the state level, greenhouse gases are regulated by Ecology under the state Clean Air Act.

In 2008 Washington enacted legislation that set a series of limits on the emission of greenhouse gases within the state. The Department of Ecology is responsible for monitoring and tracking the state's progress toward the emission limits.

The state's current limits on the emission of greenhouse gases are:

- By 2020, overall greenhouse gas emissions in the state must be reduced to 1990 levels.
- By 2035, overall greenhouse gas emissions in the state must be reduced to 25 percent below 1990 levels.
- By 2050, overall greenhouse gas emissions in the state must be reduced to 50 percent below 1990 levels, or 70 percent below the state's expected emissions for that year.

As part of the 2008 legislation, Ecology and the Department of Commerce are required to submit a biennial report of the state's greenhouse gas emissions. The 2008 legislation also required Ecology to consult with the Climate Impacts Group at the University of Washington within 18 months of each global or national assessment of climate change science, and to provide a report to the Legislature summarizing that science and making recommendations regarding whether the state's greenhouse gas emissions reduction requirements need to be updated. The Department of Ecology's most recent such report was issued in 2016 and recommended the following greenhouse gas emissions limits:

- By 2020, reduce overall emissions of greenhouse gases in the state to 1990 levels.
- By 2035, reduce overall greenhouse gas emissions in the state to 40 percent below 1990 levels.
- By 2050, reduce overall greenhouse gas emissions in the state to 80 percent below 1990 levels.

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) took effect in 1994 and sets an overall framework for intergovernmental efforts to address challenges posed by climate change. The 2015 round of talks under the UNFCCC took place in Paris, France, and resulted in what is commonly referred to as the Paris Agreement. Under the Paris Agreement, each participating nation determines the contribution, known as the intended nationally determined contribution, that it will make toward a global reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. The Paris Agreement also contains a mechanism for developed countries to fund climate change adaptation and mitigation in developing countries. A total of 197 countries, including the United States, have signed the Paris Agreement.

The United States signed the Paris Agreement on April 22, 2016. Under the intended nationally determined contribution that the United States submitted to the United Nations, the United States committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions to 26 percent below 2005 levels by 2025, and to making best efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to 28 percent below 2005 levels. On June 1, 2017, the United States announced that it would withdraw from the Paris climate agreement as soon as it is eligible to do so.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

Washington must limit emission of greenhouse gases to achieve the following reductions for the state:

- By 2020, reduce overall emissions of greenhouse gases in the state to 1990 levels.
- By 2025, reduce greenhouse gas emissions to 19 percent below 1990 levels, and to make best efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to 21 percent below 1990 levels, consistent with the commitment submitted to the United Nations as the intended nationally determined contribution by the United States under the 2015 Paris climate agreement.
- By 2035, reduce overall emissions of greenhouse gases in the state to 40 percent below 1990 levels.
- By 2050, reduce overall emissions of greenhouse gases in the state to 80 percent below 1990 levels.

The alternative targeted reduction of greenhouse gases by 2050, to 70 percent below the state's expected emissions for that year, is eliminated.

For the biennial emissions report that the Department of Ecology (Ecology) submits to the Governor and the Legislature, Ecology must coordinate with the Department of Natural Resources to determine and report the total greenhouse gas emissions from wildfire in the state. The report must also describe the per capita and total greenhouse gas emissions of the other states, and must identify Washington's numerical ranking among the other states in terms of total and per capita emissions. The report must also address the greenhouse gas emissions reductions and carbon sequestration associated with proactive forest management practices.

The Department of Ecology's greenhouse gas reporting rules must allow for the reporting of carbon sequestration associated with urban forestry practices.

The Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee must prepare and submit to the Legislature by June 30, 2020, and every five years thereafter, an analysis of the economic impact, whether positive or negative, and the impact on jobs, whether positive or negative, resulting from the greenhouse gas emissions reductions specified in this section.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The Department of Ecology's greenhouse gas reporting rules must allow for the reporting of carbon sequestration associated with urban forestry practices. The Department of Ecology's greenhouse gas emissions report must address the greenhouse gas emissions reductions and carbon sequestration associated with proactive forest management practices.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Substitute 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) Greenhouse gas emission limits are an important statement of direction. They guide private sector entities wanting to address climate change. The bill lines up with the current climate science. The 2016 Department of Ecology report recommended more protective limits than are currently in law. The recommended limits are based on current science, with input from the Climate Impacts Group at the University of Washington. The recommended limits will help Washington do its part to address climate change.

This bill would bring Washington into consistency with other states and nations. The State of Washington report projected what it would look like to achieve these reductions. The reductions are feasible, and the technology exists today without having to rely on future innovation. As a result of the transition, household energy spending would go down, which would then free up household dollars for other uses. The reductions are fiscally prudent and consumer friendly. The reductions would involve replacing fossil fuels in electricity and transportation, which reduces reliance on foreign energy and makes Washington stand more independently on the energy landscape.

There is significant opportunity in greenhouse gas emission reductions. Climate change poses risks to natural resources and to state trusts and trust beneficiaries. It is important to have up-to-date targets in order to tackle root causes. It is also important to have the most accurate picture of how carbon moves through the ecosystem and the economy. The inclusion of an assessment of wildfire emissions is helpful.

Climate change is one of the most serious threats facing the planet and nation today. It is important that energy policy align with current climate science. It is important to limit global temperature increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius. There are multiple perils associated with climate change, including earlier snow melt and declining air quality. This bill aligns Washington's emissions limits with the 2015 Paris Agreement. The costs of climate change are rising, and this issue becomes more urgent every day.

(Opposed) None.

(Other) More than 30 percent of the state's carbon emissions are sequestered by forests in Washington, and 19 percent of that occurs on private forestlands. Managed forests are a part of the solution, which the bill recognizes.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Slatter, prime sponsor; Stu Clark, Department of Ecology; Vlad Gutman-Britten, Climate Solutions; Dan Stonington, Department of Natural Resources; and Phyllis Farrell, Washington League of Women Voters.

(Other) Jason Callahan, Washington Forest Protection Association.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: Kelly Hall, Climate Solution; Thad Curtz; Joanna Eide, Department of Natural Resources; and Todd Myers, Washington Policy Center.