

FINAL BILL REPORT

2SSB 5352

C 78 L 19
Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Concerning the Walla Walla watershed management pilot program.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Walsh, Warnick, McCoy, Kuderer, Van De Wege and Hasegawa).

Senate Committee on Agriculture, Water, Natural Resources & Parks
Senate Committee on Ways & Means
House Committee on Rural Development, Agriculture, & Natural Resources
House Committee on Appropriations

Background: Legislation passed in 2009 created the Walla Walla Pilot Local Water Management Program. The local water management board was created, with representatives drawn from city and county government, federally recognized Indian tribes, conservation districts, and water rights holders. The board is authorized, among other duties, to assume the role of the local watershed planning unit, to administer the local water plan process, to manage banked water, to acquire water rights, and enter into agreements with water rights holders to not divert water becoming available from local water plans and water banking activities.

The board must produce a water plan for the Walla Walla watershed. The water plan may be effective for a term of one to ten years. The plan must address, among other things, a determination of the baseline water use for all water rights in the basin, options for reducing total water use from the baseline, a set of practices providing flexibility in water use, and an estimate of the amount of water that would remain instream for fish.

The pilot program legislation authorized the board to establish a water bank in which surface and groundwater right holders may deposit their water rights on a permanent or temporary basis. The board may manage those water rights to mitigate for impairment to instream flows and other existing water rights.

The Walla Walla Pilot Local Water Management Program expires on June 30, 2019.

Summary: The expiration date for the Walla Walla Pilot Local Water Management Program is extended from June 30, 2019, to June 30, 2021. During the transition period between July 1, 2019, and June 30, 2021, the board must accomplish the following tasks:

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- participate with Department of Ecology to complete performance and financial audits of the Walla Walla Pilot Local Water Management Program's performance over the course of its existence by the deadline of June 30, 2020;
- continue to work with Ecology, with the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, and with other participants to advance the Walla Walla basin flow enhancement study;
- collaborate with Ecology to prepare a 30-year integrated water resource management strategic plan, which must incorporate the findings and recommendations from the financial and performance audits;
- develop with Ecology a report to the Legislature recommending the scope and scale of an integrated water resource management strategic plan to achieve the outcomes of improved and sustainable flows for fish, adequate water supplies for agricultural, municipal, and domestic water users, and improved habitat and floodplain functionality in the Walla Walla watershed; and
- coordinate with the Office of the Columbia River to request funding to complete tasks required during the transition period.

The board, in collaboration with Ecology, must provide its report on the above tasks to the Legislature by November 1, 2020.

Votes on Final Passage:

Senate	48	0
House	96	0

Effective: June 30, 2019