
Environment & Energy Committee

HB 1170

Brief Description: Improving climate resilience through updates to the state's integrated climate response strategy.

Sponsors: Representatives Street, Couture, Berry, Ramel, Fitzgibbon, Lekanoff, Duerr, Thai and Pollet; by request of Department of Ecology.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires the Department of Ecology (Ecology) to update the Integrated Climate Change Response Strategy (Strategy) by July 2024, and every four years thereafter, and report on implementation and recommendations to the Governor and the Legislature.
- Expands Ecology's collaboration and engagement requirements, and requires Ecology to work with the University of Washington Climate Impacts Group when updating the Strategy.
- Adds to and makes changes to the requirements for the Strategy's content.
- Requires Ecology to coordinate a state response to climate resilience-related federal funding opportunities.

Hearing Date: 1/12/23

Staff: Megan McPhaden (786-7114).

Background:

Integrated Climate Change Response Strategy.

Legislation enacted in 2009 directed various state agencies to develop an Integrated Climate

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Change Response Strategy (Strategy) by December 1, 2011. The Strategy should better enable state and local agencies, public and private businesses, nongovernmental organizations, and individuals to prepare for, address, and adapt to the impacts of climate change. In 2012, the State of Washington's Strategy was published by the Department of Ecology (Ecology).

Enacted in 2021, the Climate Commitment Act requires the Governor to establish a coordinated and strategic approach to climate resilience, and to produce an updated statewide strategy for addressing climate risks and improving resilience of communities and ecosystems.

The Initial Strategy.

Collaboration and engagement.

By December 1, 2011, Ecology must compile a Strategy in collaboration with the departments of Agriculture, Community, Trade, and Economic Development (now Commerce), Fish and Wildlife, Natural Resources, and Transportation. Where feasible, the collaborating agencies should develop the Strategy in collaboration with local governments that have climate change plans.

Content.

The Strategy must include:

- a summary of the best-known science on climate change impacts to the state and an assessment of the state's vulnerability to these impacts;
- efforts to identify priority planning areas for action;
- an assessment of project vulnerability to the impacts of climate change;
- barriers challenging state and local governments to take action;
- opportunities to integrate climate science and projected impacts into planning and decisions; and
- methods to increase public awareness of climate change and to build support for meaningful policies and strategies.

Assistance from scientific experts.

Ecology must serve as a central clearinghouse for relevant scientific and technical information.

The collaborating state agencies may consult with qualified nonpartisan scientific experts to develop the Strategy on components including:

- assessing the effects of climate variability and change;
- developing forecasting models; and
- assessing climate change resiliency of the environment, natural systems, communities, and organizations.

Using the strategy.

The collaborating state agencies must strive to incorporate adaptation plans when planning or designing agency policies and programs, and they must consider the Strategy when designing, planning, and funding infrastructure projects.

The Interagency, Multijurisdictional System Improvement Team.

The Interagency, Multijurisdictional System Improvement Team (Team) was established in 2017 to identify, implement, and report on infrastructure system improvements that achieve certain designated outcomes, including projects that maximize value, minimize overall costs and disturbance to the community, and ensure long-term durability and resilience.

The Team includes representatives from state infrastructure programs that provide funding for drinking water, wastewater, and stormwater projects. The Public Works Board and representatives from the departments of Ecology, Health, and Commerce facilitate the work of this team.

Summary of Bill:

Updated Integrated Climate Change Response Strategy.

Reporting timelines.

The Department of Ecology (Ecology) must compile an updated Integrated Climate Change Response Strategy (Strategy) by July 1, 2024, and provide recommendations to the Governor and Legislature on a durable structure for coordinating and implementing the state's Strategy, including a process to prioritize and coordinate state agency funding for climate resilience.

Ecology must update the Strategy every four years.

Starting by September 30, 2025, Ecology must report on implementation progress and agency needs and priorities to the Governor's Office in interim biennial work plans for the budget planning process.

Beginning in 2025, agencies who must implement actions in the Strategy must provide the information needed for reporting to Ecology by August 15 of odd-numbered years. Agencies may include any resources needed to carry out the required planning and designing of policies and programs.

Collaboration and engagement.

Ecology must consult and collaborate with, at a minimum, additional state agencies: the Department of Health; the State Conservation Commission; the Puget Sound Partnership; and the Washington State Military Department's Emergency Management Division. Ecology will engage other relevant state agencies so climate resilience actions, such as those related to worker safety and community response, are included in the Strategy.

Ecology must also collaborate and engage with tribal governments, nongovernmental organizations, public and private businesses, and overburdened communities. Ecology must engage with historically or currently marginalized groups, overburdened communities, vulnerable populations, and tribal governments, and must conduct this engagement with guidance from the Office of Equity, the Environmental Justice Council, the community engagement plan and the tribal consultation plan adopted in 2021 under the environmental justice chapter of state law.

Content.

The Strategy's focus is narrowed to focus on the state's role to prepare for, address, and adapt to the impacts of climate change. The Strategy does not need to include many of the initial Strategy's requirements.

The Strategy must be guided by the following principles:

- prioritize actions that: (1) reduce greenhouse gas emissions and build climate preparedness; (2) deploy natural solutions, restore habitat, or reduce stressors that exacerbate climate impacts; and (3) promote and protect human health;
- protect the state's most overburdened communities and vulnerable populations and provide more equitable outcomes; and
- consider flexible and adaptive approaches for preparing for uncertain climate impacts.

New requirements for the Strategy include:

- a summary of each collaborating state agency's climate resilience priorities, plans, and actions;
- strategies and actions to address the highest climate vulnerabilities and risks to the state's communities and ecosystems;
- a lead agency or group of agencies assigned to implement actions; and
- key gaps to advancing climate resilience actions.

The collaborating agencies are directed to assess the vulnerability of state assets and services and inform agency actions, instead of project vulnerability, to reduce expected risks and increase resiliency to the impacts of climate change.

Assistance from Climate Impacts Group, other data providers and tools, and scientific experts. Ecology must work with the University of Washington Climate Impacts Group to ensure the state has access to relevant scientific and technical information about climate change's impacts on the state's ecology, economy, public health, and society. This information and any existing climate impact tools should be in a central location.

The University of Washington Climate Impacts Group will explore opportunities to partner with other data providers and leverage existing tools such as the Department of Health's Washington Tracking Network.

In updating the Strategy, the collaborating state agencies may continue to seek assistance from qualified nonpartisan scientific experts, but with a new specified set of components:

- best practices and processes for prioritizing resilience actions and assessing the effectiveness of potential actions;
- developing a process for identifying metrics and measuring progress and success toward statewide resilience goals; and
- analyzing opportunities and gaps in current agency resilience efforts.

Implementing the strategy.

The collaborating state agencies are required to consider current and future climate change impacts to the fullest allowable extent and incorporate climate resilience and adaptation actions as priority activities when planning, designing, revising, or implementing relevant agency policies and programs.

Coordinating Funding for Climate Resilience.

Ecology must work with the Office of Financial Management and other relevant state agencies and entities to coordinate a state response to climate resilience-related federal funding opportunities.

Ecology may develop an interagency work group structure and leverage existing forums like the Interagency, Multijurisdictional System Improvement Team to coordinate climate resilience funding.

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.