

FINAL BILL REPORT

E2SHB 1170

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Synopsis as Enacted

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

Sponsors: House Committee on Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representatives Street, Couture, Berry, Ramel, Fitzgibbon, Lekanoff, Duerr, Thai and Pollet; by request of Department of Ecology).

House Committee on Environment & Energy
House Committee on Appropriations
Senate Committee on Environment, Energy & Technology
Senate Committee on Ways & Means

Background:

Integrated Climate Change Response Strategy.

State agencies were required to develop an Integrated Climate Change Response Strategy (Strategy) that was published in 2012 by the Department of Ecology (Ecology). The Strategy was intended to 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.

Ecology was required to compile the initial 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 were required to develop the Strategy in collaboration with local governments that have climate change plans.

The Strategy includes:

- 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;

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.

- 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.

Under the Strategy, Ecology serves 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.

The collaborating state agencies are required to 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.

Climate Commitment Act.

The 2021 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.

Summary:

Updated Integrated Climate Change Response Strategy.

Reporting Requirements for the Department of Ecology.

By September 30, 2024, the Department of Ecology (Ecology) must:

- compile an updated Integrated Climate Change Response Strategy (Strategy);
- provide recommendations to the Governor and Legislature on a durable structure for coordinating and implementing the Strategy, including a process to prioritize and coordinate state agency funding for climate resilience; and

- provide estimated state agency costs for implementing the Strategy, including existing programs and new recommended actions, to the Governor and Legislature.

These estimated state agency costs to implement the strategy should be projected over two, four, and 10-year time frames. Ecology must track funding that is appropriated by the Legislature for implementing the Strategy. This information must be included as part of reporting to the Governor's office, every other year starting in 2025.

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.

Agencies required to implement actions under the Strategy must biennially provide the information needed for reporting to Ecology. 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, the following state agencies additional to those required to participate in the initial Strategy: the Department of Health, the State Conservation Commission, the Puget Sound Partnership, and the Washington State Military Department's Emergency Management Division.

Ecology must collaborate and engage with tribal governments, nongovernmental organizations, public and private businesses, and overburdened communities. In developing the engagement plan for developing the Strategy, Ecology must announce the opportunity to participate and include, to the extent possible, organizations that express interest in participating. 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, and Ecology's community engagement plan and the tribal consultation plan.

Content.

The Strategy is narrowed to focus on preparing for, addressing, and adapting 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, with specific prioritized actions outlined; and (3) promote and protect human health;
- protect most overburdened communities and vulnerable populations and provide

- more equitable outcomes;
- consider flexible and adaptive approaches for preparing for uncertain climate impacts; and
- address risks in each geographic region of the state appropriately.

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 communities and ecosystems;
- a lead agency or group of agencies assigned to implement actions; and
- key gaps to advancing climate resilience actions.

Assistance From the Climate Impacts Group, Other Data Providers and Tools, and Scientific Experts.

Ecology must work with the University of Washington Climate Impacts Group to ensure access to relevant scientific and technical information about climate change's impacts on the state's ecology, economy, public health, and society.

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. The University of Washington Climate Impacts Group must also examine existing best practices and new methods to measure and evaluate climate change resilience, with the examination due to the Legislature by June 1, 2024.

In updating the Strategy, the collaborating state agencies may continue to seek assistance from qualified nonpartisan scientific experts, for purposes of:

- 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 must 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.

No New Regulatory Authority.

Nothing related to developing and updating the Integrated Climate Change Response Strategy creates any new or additional regulatory authority for any state agency.

Coordinating Funding for Climate Resilience.

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

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

Votes on Final Passage:

House	82	14	
Senate	34	14	(Senate amended)
House	87	10	(House concurred)

Effective: July 23, 2023