

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5390

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Local Government, February 13, 2025
Ways & Means, February 28, 2025

Title: An act relating to updating the cost of the discover pass and day-use permits.

Brief Description: Updating the cost of the discover pass and day-use permits. [**Revised for 1st Substitute:** Concerning the discover pass and distributions.]

Sponsors: Senators Stanford and Nobles.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Local Government: 1/30/25, 2/13/25 [DP-WM].
Ways & Means: 2/25/25, 2/28/25 [DPS, DNP, w/oRec].

Brief Summary of First Substitute Bill

- Increases the cost of a Discover Pass from \$30 to \$45, and increases the threshold for changes in revenue distributions from \$71 million to \$100 million in a biennium..

SENATE COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Majority Report: Do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Salomon, Chair; Lovelett, Vice Chair; Torres, Ranking Member; Bateman and Goehner.

Staff: Rohan Bhattacharjee (786-7534)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5390 be substituted therefor, and the

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substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Robinson, Chair; Stanford, Vice Chair, Operating; Trudeau, Vice Chair, Capital; Frame, Vice Chair, Finance; Torres, Assistant Ranking Member, Operating; Cleveland, Conway, Dhingra, Hansen, Kauffman, Pedersen, Riccelli, Saldaña, Wellman and Wilson, C..

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senators Schoesler, Ranking Member, Capital; Dozier, Assistant Ranking Member, Capital; Boehnke, Braun, Hasegawa and Wagoner.

Minority Report: That it be referred without recommendation.

Signed by Senators Gildon, Ranking Member, Operating; Muzzall and Warnick.

Staff: Jed Herman (786-7346)

Background: In 2011, the Legislature created the Discover Pass for parks and other recreation lands and facilities operated by Washington State Parks, the Department of Fish and Wildlife, and the Department of Natural Resources. The cost of an annual Discover Pass (Pass) is \$30, and the day-use permit (Permit) is \$10.

The Pass offers access to millions of acres of state recreation lands in Washington, including more than 100 developed state parks, more than 350 primitive recreation sites, including campgrounds and picnic areas, nearly 700 water-access points, nearly 2000 miles of designated water and land recreation trails, more than 80 natural areas, and more than 30 wildlife areas.

A Pass is required for any motor vehicle to park or operate at any recreation site or lands. It is valid for one year for two motor vehicles. A Permit is valid for only one calendar day.

One complimentary Pass must be provided to a volunteer who performed 24 hours of service on agency- sanctioned volunteer projects in a year. The agency must provide vouchers to volunteers identifying the number of volunteer hours they have provided for each project. Married spouses may present an agency with combined vouchers demonstrating the collective performance of 24 hours of service on agency-sanctioned volunteer projects in a year to be redeemed for a single complimentary Pass.

Revenues collected from the sales of Passes and Permits are deposited into the Recreation Access Pass Account (RAPA). From RAPA, the revenue is distributed to dedicated accounts at State Parks, the Department of Fish and Wildlife, and the Department of Natural Resources at the ratio of 84 percent-8 percent-8 percent, respectively. At the point that the total revenue in a biennium reaches the threshold of \$71 million, the distribution ratio becomes evenly split among the three agencies.

Every four years, the Office of Financial Management is required to review the cost of the Pass and the Permit, and if necessary, recommend to the Legislature an adjustment to the

cost to account for inflation.

Summary of Bill (First Substitute): The cost of an annual Pass is increased from \$30 to \$45. The threshold for revenue distribution changes for the biennium is increased from \$71 million to \$100 million.

EFFECT OF CHANGES MADE BY WAYS & MEANS COMMITTEE (First Substitute):

- Changes the title of the bill to concerning the Discover Pass and distributions.
- Removes the changes to the day-use permit fee amount.
- Adjusts the revenue distribution threshold for the biennium from \$71 million to \$100 million.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Original Bill (Local Government): PRO: Discover Pass fees must be increased to keep up with inflationary trends and ensure financial stability for state parks. The history of state parks is replete with funding challenges, including severe budget cuts after the Great Recession that led to mass layoffs and potential park closures. The family Discover Pass cap should be increased as well. Further, three license plates per Discover Pass should be permitted instead of a family pass.

While increasing the fees is important, balancing financial sustainability with accessibility, particularly for low-income individuals, is important as well. There are concerns about the distribution of funds to agencies like the Department of Natural Resources and Fish & Wildlife. The percentage allocated to these agencies should be increased, in line with this fee increase.

CON: This fee increase is a hidden tax. I rarely hear about accountability or budget cuts.

Persons Testifying (Local Government): PRO: Senator Derek Stanford, Prime Sponsor; James King, Citizens for Parks and Recreation; Mark Brown, Former State Parks Commissioner; Cynthia Wilkerson, WDFW; Sam Hensold, Department of Natural Resources; Michael DeCramer, Washington Trails Association; Jeff Chapman, Back Country Horsemen of Washington; Brian Considine, State Parks, Policy & Gov't Affairs Director; Conor Marshall, The Mountaineers.

CON: Jeff Pack, Washington Citizens Against Unfair Taxes.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (Local Government): No one.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Original Bill (Ways & Means): *The committee recommended a different version of the bill than what was heard.* PRO: When the Discover Pass was adopted in 2011, it was envisioned that there would be inflationary adjustments over time. There have not been any inflationary adjustments, and the increase in the bill is in line with inflation. These revenues will help State Parks to not make drastic cuts. The Day Use fee should stay at \$10. With the large reductions during the Great Recession, it has taken years to rebuild State Parks, and we don't want to go backwards. If there are any changes to the revenue distribution, there needs to be a review and a stakeholder process.

Persons Testifying (Ways & Means): PRO: James King, Citizens for Parks and Recreation; Juelanne Dalzell, Back Country Horsemen of Washington; John Floberg, Washington State Parks Foundation; Sam Hensold, Department of Natural Resources; Brian Considine, State Parks, Policy & Gov't Affairs Director; Mark Brown, Former State Parks Commissioner.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (Ways & Means): No one.