
**Natural Resources, Ecology &
Parks Committee**

HB 2384

Brief Description: Concerning the state geological survey.

Sponsors: Representatives Dickerson, Buck, Blake and B. Sullivan; by request of Department of Natural Resources.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Repeals most elements of the state geological survey and creates a new structure for the survey.

Hearing Date: 1/12/06

Staff: Jason Callahan (786-7117).

Background:

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR), through an appointed Supervisor of Geology, is responsible for maintaining a geological survey of the state (RCW 43.92.010). The survey is required to meet a number of objectives, including examinations of the state's mined products, the state's water resources, the state's soil classifications, and the occurrence of natural road building materials. The survey must also produce geological and economic maps and information related to science and economics deemed of value by the Supervisor of Geology (RCW 43.92.020). Reports and maps generated from the geological survey must be made available to the general public for purchase (RCW 43.92.040).

The DNR may contract with federal agencies to complete certain aspects of the survey (RCW 43.92.060 & 070). The DNR may also enter onto private property when necessary to complete the survey (RCW 43.92.080).

Summary of Bill:

Most provisions relating to the objectives of the geological survey are repealed. The only section maintained in its entirety is the express authorization for the DNR to enter onto private property if required to complete the survey. In place of the repealed sections are directions to the DNR as to how the geological survey should be accomplished.

Creation of a state geologist

Survey completion and maintenance is under the authority of the State Geologist. The State Geologist must be a licensed geologist appointed by the Commissioner of Public Lands. The State Geologist may hire employees to assist him or her carry out the work required to manage the survey. The duties of the State Geologist also include the prompt completion and publication of all notes, charts, and maps covering formal mineral and geological investigations conducted by the DNR and the preparation of a biennial legislative report.

Purpose and requirements of the state geological survey

The stated purpose of the geological survey is to map and study the geology of the state. The map and study must include: (1) basic mapping of the state's geological units and structure; (2) identification of geological hazards and risks; (3) documentation, regulation, and maintenance of records on the state's geological resources; and (4) promotion of general awareness and knowledge of the state's geology.

In addition to creating a map and study, the survey is also required to accomplish the following:

- Survey the geological, mineral, and energy resources of the state;
- Study mineral and ores, including the identification of additional mineral and ore users and exploration of possible new techniques for mineral treatment, mining, processing, and reclamation;
- Establish a repository of mineral samples and other information of long-term value that is available to the public;
- Continually update a map of Washington's surface and subsurface;
- Collect a library of materials relating to the state's geology;
- Serve as a bureau of information concerning the state's mineral resources and associated industries;
- Provide information and advisory services for federal, state, and local governments;
- Provide technical assistance to local governments during the preparation of land use regulations;
- Create interpretive materials to promote outdoor recreation;
- Cooperate with the federal government on survey work;
- Assess geological hazards; and
- Consider all other kindred scientific and economic questions in the fields of geology and mining.

In addition to the required elements of the survey, the State Geologist may also involve the DNR with other surveys and determinations made at the request of other state agencies. The State Geologist may also collect and exhibit samples and photographs of the state's geology.

Publications

The survey is required to prepare published information and maps relating to its content. A reasonable charge may be assessed to cover publication and distribution costs. The DNR may not release information with economic importance to third parties prior to the information being made available to the general public.

Mine safety and mapping

All mine owners in Washington are required to map the surface of their property, and the owners of working mines must also provide a map of the mine's underground workings. The DNR must adopt rules specifying the scale and content of the maps.

The DNR must also work with the federal government and private mine owners to encourage the prompt sealing of open mine shafts and holes that constitute a threat to public safety.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on 1/3/06.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.