

SENATE BILL REPORT

ESHB 1799

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Natural Resources, Ocean & Recreation, March 30, 2005

Title: An act relating to park rangers employed by the state parks and recreation commission.

Brief Description: Creating a task force on public recreational lands and public safety.

Sponsors: House Committee on Criminal Justice & Corrections (originally sponsored by Representatives B. Sullivan and Upthegrove).

Brief History: Passed House: 3/15/05, 63-33.

Committee Activity: Natural Resources, Ocean & Recreation: 3/28/05, 3/30/05 [DPA].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES, OCEAN & RECREATION

Majority Report: Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators Jacobsen, Chair; Doumit, Vice Chair; Oke, Ranking Minority Member; Fraser, Morton, Spanel, Stevens and Swecker.

Staff: Curt Gavigan (786-7437)

Background: A general authority law enforcement agency is an agency, department, or division of state or local government with the primary function of detecting and apprehending persons committing infractions or violations of traffic or criminal laws. The Washington State Patrol and Department of Fish and Wildlife are general authority law enforcement agencies. Officers of these agencies are considered general authority peace officers.

A limited authority law enforcement agency is an agency, department, or division of state or local government that has the function of, among other things, apprehending or detecting persons committing infractions or violations of traffic or criminal law relating to a limited subject area. Eight agencies, including the State Parks and Recreation Commission and the Department of Natural Resources, are considered limited authority law enforcement agencies. Officers of these agencies are limited authority peace officers.

The Commission may adopt policies and enforce rules pertaining to the use, care, and administration of state parks and parkways. The Parks and Recreation Commission is also authorized to vest employees with police powers to enforce the laws of the state. However, absent a special commission, the statute does not expressly grant park rangers permission to enforce the laws of Washington outside the territory of state recreational lands.

Summary of Amended Bill: The Task Force on State Public Recreational Lands and Public Safety (task force) is created. The task force is comprised of twelve members, including: (1) two members each from the House of Representatives and the Senate; (2) the Commissioner of Public Lands or the Commissioner's designee; (3) the Chair of the State Parks and Recreation Commission or the Chair's designee; (4) the Chair of the State Fish and Wildlife

Commission or the Chair's designee; and (5) five additional appointees from designated enforcement organizations. The task force must be staffed by the Office of Program Research and Senate Committee Services.

The task force must conduct a comprehensive review of law enforcement issues in and around Washington State Parks and lands, including: (1) the extent to which illegal activity in and around such lands threatens public safety and natural resources; and (2) the ability of current state and local law enforcement to respond to illegal activity on or near public recreation lands.

The task force must provide a final report to the Legislature by December 15, 2005. The task force expires January 1, 2006.

Amended Bill Compared to Original Bill: Membership on the task force is expanded from eleven to twelve members. A representative of the Washington Association of Prosecuting Attorneys is added to the task force.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: Yes.

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

Testimony For: Illegal activities in and around State Parks seriously threaten both persons and natural resources. Looking at how law enforcement coverage for these areas can be more effectively provided can only be beneficial.

Testimony Against: None.

Who Testified: PRO: Fred Romero, State Parks and Recreation Commission; Dennis Eagle, Washington Federation of State Employees.