

PugetSoundPartnership

our sound, our community, our chance

Legislative Update

January 22, 2010

The 2010 legislative session has arrived and the first two weeks have been intense. As anticipated, this 60-day session is moving fast and we are engaged in a variety of issues. This session our agency request legislation and funding for restoration and protection projects are the highest priorities for the Puget Sound Partnership.

Agency Request Legislation

The Puget Sound Partnership jointly initiated agency request legislation with the Department of Ecology—Senate Bill 6557 and House Bill 3018. The purpose of the legislation is to limit the use of copper in vehicle brake pads, which causes a significant source of copper to enter our environment. Copper threatens the health of our streams, rivers and marine environment—including our threatened and endangered salmon. This legislation is a proactive way to phase out the use of copper in vehicle brake pads, as we develop better alternative materials that meet regulatory standards and ensure public safety. This legislation is a collaborative and proactive solution to stop a significant source of copper from damaging the health of Puget Sound and other watersheds across the state.

Guided by science from NOAA, the legislation is supported by the Association of Washington Business, Washington Environmental Council, and People for Puget Sound, as well as automobile manufactures and brake pad manufactures. The public hearing in the Senate was very positive and the House bill is scheduled for a committee hearing next week.

Legislation to reduce shoreline armoring was not introduced this session. However, our work this past interim with state agencies, the Northwest Indian Fish Commission, People for Puget Sound and other stakeholder organizations produced five key policy changes that will be refined by the Ecosystem Coordination Board and combined with a broad outreach effort in preparation for the 2011 session.

For more information about other legislation related Puget Sound recovery, please see the attached summary document.

Budget Priorities

We are working to secure funding for the highest priority restoration projects, stormwater improvements for state roads, and programs to protect Puget Sound from toxic chemicals.

Overall, concerns about the budget dominate other conversations in Olympia. The legislature has just 60 days to balance a \$2.6 billion shortfall in the 2010 state's operating budget. Last month the Governor submitted a balanced budget with no new revenues, representing \$2.6 billion in cuts to services critical to citizens such as public education and health care. However, in testimony before the Senate Ways & Means committee this week, the Governor presented a new spending plan that would restore \$779 million in services cut from her original December proposal.

Last week, the Governor laid out her priorities in her annual State of the State Address. She specifically called for lawmakers to focus on real government reform and approve measures to eliminate 78 boards and commissions, as well as the realignment or elimination of one-third of the 64 small state agencies. With specific regard to natural resources, the Oil Spill Advisory Council will be eliminated and the Puget Sound Partnership will be working to share some resources with the Recreation and Conservation Office. The details of what resources to share are still being worked out.

Governor's Natural Resources Reform Legislation

The Governor has five bills to advance recommendations from the natural resources reform effort initiated last year:

- Senate Bill 6448 reforms the Hydraulic Permit Application (HPA) requirements under the hydraulic code. The bill establishes fees for the HPA and streamlines the permitting process.
- House Bill 2442 and Senate Bill 6214 would restructure three Growth Management Hearings Boards into one and reduce the number of members from 9 to 7.
- Senate Bill 6422 would merge the five Environmental Hearings Offices to two, standardize procedures and dates, and eliminate appeals. It is not currently scheduled for a public hearing and stakeholder briefings are in process.
- Legislation has been drafted to authorize the Department of Fish and Wildlife officers to enforce regulations of the Department of Natural Resources.
- Senate Bill and 6659 House Bill 3023 would move the Pollution Liability Insurance Agency to the Department of Ecology.

Oil Spill Legislation

Because of the Puget Sound Partnership's new responsibilities for analyzing and recommending improvements to the state's oil spill programs—as directed by the Legislature in 2009—it is important to update you on two bill packages that would fund and improve oil spill protection and response.

House Bill 2965 would repair revenue shortfalls impacting DOE's oil spill program. The proposed legislation would adjust the oil spill response tax on barrels of oil by the fiscal growth factor and eliminate tax credits for pipelines and oil used for propulsion by waterborne vessels, airplanes, trains, and other vehicles.

House Bill 2964 and Senate Bill 6677 would strengthen the Department of Ecology's (DOE) contingency plan requirements for emergency vessels and facilities responses. Both bills were introduced, but neither will advance this session. DOE plans to continue working with stakeholders over the interim and reintroduce legislation in 2011. The Puget Sound Partnership actively supported and helped coordinated recommendations to improve federal contingency requirements. Our agency anticipates being involved in the refinement of these bills over the interim in support of ongoing efforts to protect Puget Sound from the devastating impacts of oil spills.

Other Issues and Information

In other news, Senator Randy Gordon, from the 40th district, was recently sworn in to replace former Senator Fred Jarrett. Senator Jarrett left the Senate to fill the No. 2 spot in County Executive Dow Constantine's office.

A summary of the Puget Sound Partnership's legislative and budget priorities is attached, as well as information about our legislation to reduce copper in brake pads and \$10 million funding proposal for Puget Sound restoration projects.

This is going to be a fast and bumpy 60 days, so hang out and stay in touch. If you have any questions about information in this update or any issues not mentioned, please call or email me any time.

Respectfully,
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