

SECOND SUBSTITUTE SENATE BILL 5122

Preserving regulatory assistance provisions

PROGRAM IMPACTS

This legislation originated as request legislation to reauthorize the Governor's Office of Regulatory Assistance (ORA) consistent with the January 2007 sunset review recommendations of the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee (JLARC). JLARC sunset review report, findings, and recommendations can be found at <http://www1.leg.wa.gov/reports/07-3.pdf>.

This bill:

- Preserves the joint ORA regulatory assistance framework provided by Ecology, the Office of Financial Management (OFM), and the Governor's Office.
- Extends the authority for Ecology and state regulatory agencies to enter into cost-reimbursement agreements with willing applicants.

ORA and cost-reimbursement are essential tools for Ecology to bring additional capacity and focus to improving the permitting and regulatory process (at project- and system-levels). ORA and cost-reimbursement are key to keeping project decision-making moving forward in a productive and coordinated manner. Working with ORA is a major part of Ecology's regulatory improvement strategy to bring about changes that meet the needs of customers without sacrificing the environment.

RESOURCE IMPACTS

Funding for Ecology to provide two key service aspects of 2SSB 5122 [i.e., 5.0 Regional Assistance Lead FTEs (<http://www.ora.wa.gov/regional.asp>) and 3.0 Environmental Permit Service Center FTEs (<http://www.ora.wa.gov/center.asp>)] will be provided by an interagency regulatory assistance service agreement with OFM. Funding for all ORA services is provided centrally to OFM, and then distributed through interagency regulatory assistance service agreements.

Funding for Ecology to provide cost-reimbursement services will be provided by individual reimbursement agreements themselves as applicants opt for cost-reimbursement services.

WORK PLAN

2SSB5122 reauthorizes with little policy change the current regulatory assistance approach. As such, implementation of Regional Assistance Leads, Environmental Permit Service Center, and Cost-Reimbursement functions will continue for the 07-09 biennium as for the 05-07 biennium.

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