

RCW 90.94.090 Joint legislative task force on water resource mitigation—Water resource mitigation pilot projects. (Expires January 1, 2029.)

(1) A joint legislative task force on water resource mitigation is established to review the treatment of surface water and groundwater appropriations as they relate to instream flows and fish habitat, to develop and recommend a mitigation sequencing process and scoring system to address such appropriations, and to review the Washington supreme court decision in *Foster v. Department of Ecology*, 184 Wn.2d 465, 362 P.3d 959 (2015).

(2) The task force must consist of the following members:

(a) Two members from each of the two largest caucuses of the senate, appointed by the president of the senate;

(b) Two members from each of the two largest caucuses of the house of representatives, appointed by the speaker of the house of representatives;

(c) A representative from the department, appointed by the director of the department;

(d) A representative from the department of fish and wildlife, appointed by the director of the department of fish and wildlife;

(e) A representative from the department of agriculture, appointed by the director of the department of agriculture;

(f) One representative from each of the following groups, appointed by the consensus of the cochairs of the task force:

(i) An organization representing the farming industry in Washington;

(ii) An organization representing Washington cities;

(iii) Two representatives from an environmental advocacy organization or organizations;

(iv) An organization representing municipal water purveyors;

(v) An organization representing business interests;

(vi) Representatives of two federally recognized Indian tribes, one invited by recommendation of the Northwest Indian fisheries commission, and one invited by recommendation of the Columbia river intertribal fish commission.

(3) If a member has not been designated for a position set forth in subsection (2) of this section, that position may not be counted for purposes of determining a quorum.

(4) One cochair of the task force must be a member of the majority caucus of one chamber of the legislature, and one cochair must be a member of the minority caucus of the other chamber of the legislature, as those caucuses existed as of January 19, 2018.

(5) The first meeting of the task force must occur by June 30, 2018.

(6) Staff support for the task force must be provided by the office of program research and senate committee services. The department and the department of fish and wildlife shall cooperate with the task force and provide information as the cochairs reasonably request.

(7) Within existing appropriations, the expenses of the operations of the task force, including the expenses associated with the task force's meetings, must be paid jointly and in equal amounts by the senate and the house of representatives. Task force expenditures are subject to approval by the house executive rules committee and the senate facility and operations committee. Legislative members of the task force are reimbursed for travel expenses in accordance with RCW 44.04.120. Nonlegislative members are

not entitled to be reimbursed for travel expenses if they are elected officials or are participating on behalf of an employer, governmental entity, or other organization. Any reimbursement for other nonlegislative members is subject to chapter 43.03 RCW.

(8) (a) By November 15, 2019, and November 15, 2022, the joint legislative task force must make recommendations to the legislature in compliance with RCW 43.01.036.

(b) Recommendations of the joint legislative task force must be made by a sixty percent majority of the appointed members of the task force. The representatives of the departments of fish and wildlife, ecology, and agriculture are not eligible to vote on the recommendations. Minority recommendations that achieve the support of at least five of the appointed voting members of the task force may also be submitted to the legislature.

(9) The department shall issue permit decisions for up to five water resource mitigation pilot projects. It is the intent of the legislature to use the pilot projects to inform the legislative task force process while also enabling the processing of water right applications that address water supply needs. The department is authorized to issue permits in reliance upon water resource mitigation of impacts to instream flows and closed surface water bodies under the following mitigation sequence:

(a) Avoiding impacts by: (i) Complying with mitigation required by adopted rules that set forth minimum flows, levels, or closures; or (ii) making the water diversion or withdrawal subject to the applicable minimum flows or levels; or

(b) Where avoidance of impacts is not reasonably attainable, minimizing impacts by providing permanent new or existing trust water rights or through other types of replacement water supply resulting in no net annual increase in the quantity of water diverted or withdrawn from the stream or surface water body and no net detrimental impacts to fish and related aquatic resources; or

(c) Where avoidance and minimization are not reasonably attainable, compensating for impacts by providing net ecological benefits to fish and related aquatic resources in the water resource inventory area through in-kind or out-of-kind mitigation or a combination thereof, that improves the function and productivity of affected fish populations and related aquatic habitat. Out-of-kind mitigation may include instream or out-of-stream measures that improve or enhance existing water quality, riparian habitat, or other instream functions and values for which minimum instream flows or closures were established in that watershed.

(10) The department must monitor the implementation of the pilot projects, including all mitigation associated with each pilot project, approved under this section at least annually through December 31, 2028.

(11) The pilot projects eligible for processing under this section, based on criteria as of January 19, 2018, include:

(a) A city operating a group A water system in Kitsap county and water resource inventory area 15, with a population between 13,000 and 14,000;

(b) A city operating a group A water system in Pierce county and water resource inventory area 10, with a population between 9,500 and 10,500;

(c) A city operating a group A water system in Thurston county and water resource inventory area 11, with a population between 8,500 and 9,500;

(d) A nonprofit mutual water system operating a group A water system in Pierce county and water resource inventory area 12, with between 10,500 and 11,500 service connections; and

(e) An irrigation district located in Whatcom county and water resource inventory area 1, solely for the purpose of processing changes of water rights from surface water to groundwater, and implementing flow augmentation to benefit instream flows.

(12) Water right applicants eligible to be processed under this pilot project authority must elect to be included in the pilot project review by notifying the department by July 1, 2018. Once an applicant notifies the department of its intent to be processed under this pilot project authority, subsection (9) of this section applies to final decisions issued by the department, even if such a final decision is issued after the expiration of this section.

(13) By November 15, 2018, the department must furnish the task force with information on conceptual mitigation plans for each water resource mitigation pilot project application. By November 15, 2019, and November 15, 2022, the department must provide the task force with an update on the mitigation plans based on additional information developed after November 15, 2018.

(14) To ensure that the processing of pilot project applications can inform the task force process in a timely manner, the department must expedite processing of applications for water resource mitigation pilot projects. The applicant for each pilot project must reimburse the department for the department's costs of processing the applicant's application.

(15) The water resource mitigation pilot project authority granted to the department does not affect or modify any other procedural requirements of chapter 90.03, 90.44, or 90.54 RCW that apply to the processing of such applications.

(16) The joint legislative task force expires December 31, 2022. During the period from November 16, 2019, through December 31, 2022, the work of the task force is limited to:

(a) A review of any additional information that may be developed after November 15, 2019, as a result of the pilot projects established under subsection (9) of this section; and

(b) An update of the task force's November 15, 2019, recommendations.

(17) This section expires January 1, 2029. [2021 c 332 s 7024. Prior: 2019 c 413 s 7035; 2018 c 1 s 301.]

Effective date—2021 c 332: See note following RCW 43.19.501.

Effective date—2019 c 413: See note following RCW 28B.15.210.

Intent—2018 c 1: See note following RCW 90.94.010.