

Senator Van De Wege - District 24
(Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee Member)
February 1, 2023 ~ 9:45a.m. - 10:00 a.m.

Facilitator Greeting

Lee First

Participants Self introductions

Lee First, Becky Durr, David Linn, Krestine Reed, Maggie Franquemont, John Shaw

Bill 1: Reduce Plastic Pollution HB 1085

Lee First

We're interested in this bill and hope it passes the house.

Hope you will support it when it comes to the Senate.

Would you consider taking the House bill forward in the Senate?

I missed capturing Lee's actual dialogue until the very end. Huge apology for missing Lee's comments, but the Senator agreed whole heartedly with her.

Lee First:

So important.

Senator Van De Wege:

Okay. I hate plastic as well.

Lee First:

<laugh>. All right. Becky

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Bill 2: Reducing PCBs SB 5369

Becky Durr:

Okay. First of all, I'd like to thank you for sponsoring Bill 5369. Toxic PCBs and consumer products eventually contaminate Washington Waterways. I did not know how many everyday products contain these poisons, but now I know that when I use paper as mulch in my organic garden, I am probably releasing PCBs into the soil, down to the water table, then nearby Stewart Creek, then the Wishkah River, then the Chehalis River, then the Pacific Ocean. Now I know that when the neighborhood kids make chalk art on the streets, those PCBs will end up in the ocean. This bill should reduce concentrations of PCBs in our waters from these and many other products. I support this bill. And I wonder, do you have comments or suggestions on how all of us can support its passage?

Senator Van De Wege:

I think staying involved, certainly talking with delegation from the 19th probably is important. The southern part of Grace Harbor, counties, they represent and then I

believe the color yellow is the worst out of that PCB. But yeah, I support that bill. Hopefully, it can make some progress this year.

Becky Durr:

Thank you.

Senator Van De Wege:

Yeah.

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Bill 3: Water Mitigation Bill SB 5517 (Foster Bill)

Lee First:

Senator, now we're gonna talk about the Foster Bill, Senate Bill 5517. We are afraid we might disagree because we oppose this bill.

Senator Van De Wege:

Yeah

Lee First:

I live on the banks of the Chehalis River. This summer, the Chehalis River experienced the lowest flows ever recorded. We oppose this bill because it will allow excessive water use when we're already spending millions of dollars on salmon recovery. The situation of low flows in our rivers is dire. We feel that this bill will allow the situation to get worse. We understand cities need this water, but we think that they can get it from groundwater or other places. I realize this is a really complicated bill, but you know, I've seen firsthand how low our rivers are, and we're just really concerned that this bill, if it passes, will make the situation worse.

Senator Van De Wege:

Sure. And I understand that it's fine not to agree on everything. These are recommendations. So passing the bill in and of itself is not going to have too much profound effect. Although I do think it is something we need to look at and keep in mind, The bill, in my mind, actually helps with low river runs during the critical months cuz it's gonna set up areas where we can, or set up ways / methods that we can put more water in rivers when they need it most. Without doing bills like that though. So we can't control the growth of population in Western Washington by saying there's not enough water, it's not gonna work. We have the Growth Management Act that's supposed to control growth, but saying simply, you can't move here. You can't develop there because there's not enough water is not gonna play out. So I think we need to continue to plan for people to come here in droves, which they're gonna do as the rest of the country experiences climate change a little quicker and sooner than we do. I think we need to think outside the box to make sure there's water for fish and water for people.

Lee First:

Yes. Okay. Well, it's good to know where you're at on that. Maggie, do you have anything to add to that?

Maggie Franquemont:

The only thing that I have to add is section one of this bill is really the part of the bill that we have the most opposition for. We really feel like the sequenced mitigation that is outlined isn't well thought through. And most of the things that are in section one did not pass out of the Foster Task Force, the joint legislative task force, with even a majority of folks looking at, I think that there are some real problems with this bill trying to pass it off as recommendations from the Joint Task Force. It simply does, like a lot of the things in this bill, didn't come out of the task force. They were recommended to the task force, and then the task force voted no on them. We were pretty disappointed with,

Senator Van De Wege:

I don't think that's the case, Maggie. I don't think -

Maggie Franquemont:

That there are, there are definitely things that Judy Warnick voted on, uh, at the task force that are voted no on that are in this bill. Um, and we're pretty disappointed by it. We felt like we made some really good progress towards the end of the task force working with Ecology as well as with Agriculture to try and find more water for our cities. And this bill, I think, takes a few steps back from progress that was made.

Senator Van De Wege:

Okay. What's next?

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Snookumchuck River / Centralia Power Plant

Lee First:

Oh, I wanna butt in with something about Skookumchuck River real quick. So, you know the Centralia Power Plant is going outta business in 2025. And so the water rights are owned by the company that has purchased that coal mine. And so, you know, this is an example. The Skookumchuck is drastically low. And, so you know, I'm not absolutely positive that there's a connection here, but I know the City of Centralia and Chehalis have their eye on that water and we, that the, the Skookumchuck River and the Chehalis River need that water or, or the whole situation is, you know, just dire.

Senator Van De Wege:

Okay,

Lee First:

Alright.

Senator Van De Wege:

There's nothing the state can do on that. We could potentially try to bid and buy it, but, you know, that company owns that water, right. There's limits on what they can do with it [water], but anything within the law they can certainly, certainly do.

Krestine Reed:

Hmm. Yep. That's unfortunately true.

Lee First:

Alright, Maggie, do you wanna say something about the adjudications and the,

Senator Van De Wege:

Oh, Lee, could I ask you real fast? I thought I heard it's closing down in 2025. I thought I heard that they stopped burning coal, like they've stopped producing power.

Lee First:

I believe they're still producing power, but they're using fracked gas now.

Senator Van De Wege:

Okay, okay.

Lee First:

So it's still running and they're legal to run it until 2025, but I think they're transitioning to burning gas.

Senator Van De Wege:

Okay.

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Provisos: 5th Ave Dam Funding and Adjudication Funding

Maggie Franquemont:

The last two things we just wanted to bring to your attention, Senator Van De Wege are two budget provisos. One in regard to the 5th Avenue Dam removal funding. The dam creates Capital Lake in Olympia and the other for the adjudications in the Nooksack and the Middle Columbia watersheds. We think that the funding for both of these projects will have substantial benefits, both to our water quality and also our water resource management, particularly in the Nooksack. I know that there's not much for you to do with these, but as the budget moves forward, we would just like support in keeping those provisos in the budget.

Senator Van De Wege:

Yeah, I'm, I'm opposite with you on that too. Especially the Nooksack adjudication is a messy process. Just adjudication is a messy process that's extremely expensive and is gonna take decades to figure out. I honestly don't think that it's gonna have a lot of change on quality and quantity by the time it's done. And, it's going to cost tens of millions of dollars that could go towards some better projects to help the Nooksack. I don't know, we're probably already going down that road, so in my mind unfortunate, but, Yeah.

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Closing and Good By

Lee First:

Well, let's see. We're about out of time. Are we gonna get a picture with you,

Krestine Reed:

I got it. I got several as a matter of fact. Okay?

Senator Van De Wege:

I'm good. Okay.

Appreciate everybody talking today is, it was good to hear your thoughts and I think we have a lot of common ground. We don't agree on everything, but that's okay. We'll just keep talking.

Bye.

