

Amendment to SB 592

1 Amend the title of the bill by replacing it with the following:

2

3 AN ACT enabling regional, conservation, and energy resource planning for habitat  
4 strongholds and wildlife corridors and creating a commission to study transferring  
5 ownership of the Winnepesaukee River Basin program to an alternative authority.  
6

7 Amend the bill by replacing all after the enacting clause with the following:

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9 1 Conservation Commission; Habitat Strongholds and Wildlife Corridors Included. Amend RSA  
10 36-A:2 to read as follows:

11 36-A:2 Conservation Commission. A city or town which accepts the provisions of this chapter  
12 may establish a conservation commission, hereinafter called the commission, for the proper  
13 utilization and protection of the natural resources and for the protection of watershed resources of  
14 said city or town. Such commission shall conduct researches into its local land and water areas and  
15 shall seek to coordinate the activities of unofficial bodies organized for similar purposes, and may  
16 advertise, prepare, print and distribute books, maps, charts, plans and pamphlets which in its  
17 judgment it deems necessary for its work. It shall keep an [~~index~~] **inventory** of all open space and  
18 natural, aesthetic or ecological areas, **including habitat strongholds as defined in RSA 207:1,**  
19 **XIII-a and wildlife corridors as defined in RSA 207:1, XXXVI**, within the city or town, as the  
20 case may be, with the plan of obtaining information pertinent to proper utilization of such areas,  
21 including lands owned by the state or lands owned by a town or city. **The inventory of habitat**  
22 **strongholds and wildlife corridors is intended for informational purposes for regional**  
23 **planning commissions and shall not be utilized as the basis for municipal zoning or**  
24 **planning purposes.** It shall keep an [~~index~~] **inventory** of all marshlands, swamps and all other  
25 wet lands in a like manner, and may recommend to the city council or selectmen or to the  
26 department of natural and cultural resources a program for the protection, development or better  
27 utilization of all such areas. It shall keep accurate records of its meetings and actions and shall file  
28 an annual report which shall be printed in the annual town or municipal report. The commission  
29 may appoint such clerks and other employees or subcommittees as it may from time to time require.

30 2 Purposes; Habitat Strongholds and Wildlife Corridors Included. Amend RSA 36:45 to read as  
31 follows:

32 36:45 Purposes. The purpose of this subdivision shall be to enable municipalities and counties  
33 to join in the formation of regional planning commissions whose duty it shall be to prepare a

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1 coordinated plan for the development of a region, taking into account present and future needs with  
2 a view toward encouraging the most appropriate use of land, such as for agriculture, forestry,  
3 industry, commerce, and housing; the facilitation of transportation and communication, **including**  
4 **habitat strongholds as defined in RSA 207:1, XIII-a and wildlife corridors as defined in**  
5 **RSA 207:1, XXXVI**; the proper and economic location of public utilities and services; the  
6 development of adequate recreational areas; the promotion of good civic design; and the wise,  
7 efficient expenditure of public funds. The aforesaid plan shall be made in order to promote the  
8 health, safety, morals and general welfare of the region and its inhabitants. To promote these  
9 purposes the office of planning and development shall delineate planning regions for the state so  
10 that each municipality of the state will fall within a delineated region and shall have the opportunity  
11 of forming or joining the regional planning commission for that planning region. In determining  
12 these regions the office shall consider such factors as community of interest and homogeneity,  
13 existing metropolitan and regional planning agencies, patterns of communication and  
14 transportation, geographic features and natural boundaries, extent of urban development, relevancy  
15 of the region for provision of governmental services and functions and its use for administering state  
16 and federal programs, the existence of physical, social and economic problems of a regional  
17 character, and other related characteristics. To accommodate changing conditions, the office may  
18 adjust the boundaries of the planning regions, after consultation with the respective regional  
19 planning commissions.

20 3 Regional Planning Commission; Powers and Duties; Habitat Strongholds and Wildlife  
21 Corridors Included. Amend RSA 36:47, I to read as follows:

22 I. A regional planning commission's powers shall be advisory, and shall generally pertain to  
23 the development of the region within its jurisdiction as a whole. Nothing in this subdivision shall be  
24 deemed to reduce or limit any of the powers, duties or obligations of planning boards in individual  
25 municipalities. The area of jurisdiction of a regional planning commission shall include the areas of  
26 the respective municipalities within the delineated planning region. It shall be the duty of a  
27 regional planning commission to prepare a comprehensive master plan for the development of the  
28 region within its jurisdiction, including the commission's recommendations, among other things, for  
29 the use of land within the region; for the general location, extent, type of use, and character of  
30 highways, major streets, intersections, parking lots, railroads, aircraft landing areas, waterways and  
31 bridges, and other means of transportation, communication, and other purposes; **including a**  
32 **consideration of habitat strongholds as defined in RSA 207:1, XIII-a and wildlife corridors**  
33 **as defined in RSA 207:1, XXXVI**; for the development, extent, and general location of parks,  
34 playgrounds, shore front developments, parkways, and other public reservations and recreation  
35 areas; for the location, type, and character of public buildings, schools, community centers, and other  
36 public property; and for the improvement, redevelopment, rehabilitation, or conservation of  
37 residential, business, industrial and other areas; including the development of programs for the

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1 modernization and coordination of buildings, housing, zoning and subdivision regulations of  
2 municipalities and their enforcement on a coordinated and unified basis. A regional planning  
3 commission may authorize its employees or consultants to render assistance on local planning  
4 problems to any municipality or county which is not a member of said regional planning commission.  
5 The cost of such assistance shall be paid entirely by the municipality or county to which the service  
6 is rendered or partly by said municipality or county and partly by any gift, grant, or contribution  
7 which may be available for such work or by combination thereof. Said commission shall keep a strict  
8 account of the cost of such assistance and shall provide such municipality or county with an itemized  
9 statement.

10 4 New Paragraph; Executive Director Fish and Game Commission; Consultations Regarding  
11 Habitat Strongholds and Wildlife Corridors. Amend RSA 206:10 by inserting after paragraph IV the  
12 following new paragraph:

13 V. The executive director of the fish and game commission may consult with regional  
14 planning commissions, conservation commissions, and the department of transportation concerning  
15 habitat strongholds as defined in RSA 207:1, XIII-a and wildlife corridors as defined in RSA 207:1,  
16 XXXVI.

17 5 New Section; Department of Environmental Services. Amend RSA 21-O by inserting after  
18 section 14 the following new sections:

19 21-O:14-a Winnepesaukee River Basin Program; Position Established.

20 I. There is established in the office of the commissioner the unclassified position of director  
21 of the Winnepesaukee River Basin Program (WRBP). The director shall be qualified to hold the  
22 position by reason of education and experience, and shall perform such duties as the commissioner  
23 from time to time may authorize. The director shall be responsible for the operations and  
24 maintenance of the WRPB as well as the execution of all programs and projects.

25 II. The commissioner shall nominate, for appointment by the governor, with the consent of  
26 the executive council, the unclassified director of the WRPB, who shall serve for a term of 4 years.

27 III. The salary of the director of the WRPB shall be as specified in RSA 94:1-a.

28 IV. Funding shall be transferred into a new expenditure class number 11 within accounting  
29 unit 03-44-44-442010-1300.

30 21-O:14-b Winnepesaukee River Basin Program Commission.

31 I. There is established a commission to study transferring ownership and/or operation of the  
32 Winnepesaukee River Basin program (WRBP) to an alternative authority which supports the  
33 municipalities served by the WRBP.

34 II. The members of the commission shall be as follows:

35 (a) One members of the senate, appointed by the president of the senate.

36 (b) Three members of the house of representatives, appointed by the speaker of the  
37 house of representatives.

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1 (c) The commissioner of the department of environmental services, or designee.

2 (d) One member of the public, appointed by the Winnepesaukee River Basin program  
3 advisory committee.

4 (e) One member of the public, appointed by the mayor of Laconia.

5 III. Legislative members of the commission shall receive mileage at the legislative rate when  
6 attending to the duties of the commission.

7 IV. The commission shall:

8 (a) Identify all of the state-owned physical assets that are necessary for the operation of  
9 the Winnepesaukee River Basin program (WRBP).

10 (b) Evaluate whether the WRBP should continue to be owned and operated by the state  
11 or whether ownership and/or operational control should be transferred to an alternative authority.

12 (c) Determine if ownership of the WRBP were to be transferred to such an authority,  
13 how should the value of the assets being transferred be determined.

14 (d) Identify what statutory provisions would need to be amended in order to transfer  
15 ownership and/or operational control of the WRBP.

16 (e) Receive input from the department of environmental services, the Winnepesaukee  
17 River Basin program advisory board, and the municipalities served by the WRBP.

18 (f) Identify any other issues that may need to be addressed in order to transfer  
19 ownership and/or operational control of the WRBP to an alternative authority. Issues may include  
20 but not be limited to legal requirements to create a separate regional authority and governance  
21 structure; service and intermunicipal agreements; workforce considerations; organizational  
22 requirements for finance, administration and engineering; means for sustainable operations and  
23 maintenance; mechanisms for capital projects and bonding/financing future infrastructure costs;  
24 organizational structure shortfalls; transfer of federal permit authorities; asset transfer costs and  
25 requirements; transfer of legacy financial obligations; and conceptual transition sequence and  
26 timeline.

27 V. The members of the study commission shall elect a chairperson from among the  
28 members. The first meeting of the commission shall be called by the first-named house member.  
29 The first meeting of the commission shall be held within 45 days of the effective date of this section.  
30 Three members of the commission shall constitute a quorum.

31 VI. The commission shall report its findings and any recommendations for proposed  
32 legislation to the president of the senate, the speaker of the house of representatives, the senate  
33 clerk, the house clerk, the governor, and the state library on or before November 1, 2026.

34 6 Compensation of Certain State Offices; Salaries Established; Position Added. Amend RSA  
35 94:1-a, I(b) by inserting the following:

36 JJ Department of environmental services director of Winnepesaukee River Basin  
37 Program

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1       7 Effective Date.

2           I. Sections 5 and 6 of this act shall take effect upon passage.

3           II. This remainder of this act shall take effect 60 days after its passage.

2026-0516s

AMENDED ANALYSIS

This bill:

I. Enables regional, conservation, and energy resource planning for habitat strongholds and wildlife corridors.

II. Creates a commission to study transferring ownership of the Winnepesaukee River Basin program to an alternative authority.

III. Creates the position of director of the Winnepesaukee River Basin Program within the department of environmental services.