

HISTORY OF GEOLOGIST LICENSURE IN WASHINGTON Kenneth G. Neal

The Association of Engineer Geologists, Washington State Section, has, since 1968, made periodic efforts to register geologists and engineering geologists in Washington. In 1989, Senate House Bill 1597 required a sunrise review of the practice of geology in Washington. The sunrise review recommended that no state licensing of geologists be required at that time, but recommended that further data be gathered, and that regulation should be considered again at a later time.

In 1993, a licensing bill, based on the format and language outlined in the model act prepared by the Council of Professional Geological Organizations, (CoPGO), was introduced by the late Representative Cal Anderson, but the bill died in the House Ways and Means Committee. In 1994, a new act was drafted, following a format provided by staff from the Washington Department of Licensing, and incorporating language from the CoPGO model act, but the bill never made it out of committee. A new effort to pass geologist licensure was initiated in 1999 and, in 2000, as a result of a well-organized lobbying effort, the state of Washington enacted Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill 6455, which established the licensure of geologists and established the Geologist Licensing Board (“board”). Now codified as RCW (Revised Code of Washington) 18.220, the law is similar to the draft bill compiled in 1994. The licensure program is established under the Washington Department of Licensing, and contains elements of both independent and advisory programs.

In September 2000, a technical advisory committee was appointed by the Director of the Department of Licensing (“director”) to write rules to implement the new program. The appointees were Ray Lasmanis, (State Geologist at that time), Jeff Randall (hydrogeologist), Russ Darr (hydrogeologist), Jennifer Leinart (mining geologist), the late Leonard Palmer (engineering geologist and academic member), and Ken Neal (engineering geologist). This committee drafted rules, to be approved by the board after it was appointed, that would enable the department to start the licensing process on July 1, 2001, the effective date of the legislation. With the exception of the Rules of Professional Conduct (308-15-140 WAC), this committee drafted all of the existing rules.

As noted by the department and committee members, the bill only provided for one implementation date to appoint and seat the board, receive applications, and require licensure. Senate Bill 5206, enacted in 2001, amended the original act so that the department was granted authority to start the licensure process, including appointment of the board, in April 2001. In addition, the new schedule allowed the process of licensing geologists to proceed starting July 2001 and the grandparenting period to end on June 30, 2002. It also extended the date on and after which a license was required to practice geology in Washington to July 1, 2002.

On May 8, 2001, at their first meeting, the board officially established the rules, in accordance with authority granted them by RCW 18.220.050(1) and the rules were subsequently adopted by the director. At that same meeting, the hydrogeologist specialty was established by rule in accordance with the provisions of 18.220.050(5), which authorizes the board “to designate specialties of geology to be licensed under this chapter.” All of the applicable laws and rules relating to the practice of geology in Washington can be found in 18.220 RCW, 18.235 RCW, and 308-15 WAC,” and are available online at the following address:

<http://www.dol.wa.gov/business/geologist/>