

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1437

*As Reported By House Committee on:
Fisheries & Wildlife*

Title: An act relating to game fish enhancement groups.

Brief Description: Enhancing game fish resources.

Sponsor(s): Representatives Basich, R. King, Hochstatter, Fuhrman, Orr, Morris, Jones, Cole, Haugen, Jacobsen, Riley, Wilson, Sheldon, Hargrove, R. Meyers, Kremen and Dorn.

Brief History:

Reported by House Committee on:
Fisheries & Wildlife, February 14, 1991, DP.

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
FISHERIES & WILDLIFE**

Majority Report: *Do pass.* Signed by 11 members: Representatives R. King, Chair; Morris, Vice Chair; Wilson, Ranking Minority Member; Fuhrman, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Basich; Cole; Haugen; Hochstatter; Orr; Padden; and Spanel.

Staff: Keitlyn Watson (786-7310).

Background: In 1989, the Legislature authorized the establishment of Regional Fishery Enhancement groups to encourage and assist volunteer efforts to enhance the salmon resources of the state. In 1990, the Legislature established a dedicated account to fund the operations of the groups. The account is funded by a surcharge on recreational and commercial salmon fishing licenses issued by the Department of Fisheries. The license surcharge took effect on January 1 of this year.

There has been interest in developing a similar volunteer enhancement process for game fish managed by the Department of Wildlife. The department currently oversees volunteer fish enhancement efforts through the Cooperative Projects program, which is funded by the Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account. Additional fish enhancement projects could be accomplished by authorizing Regional Game Fish Enhancement Groups.

Summary of Bill: The formation of nonprofit Regional Game Fish Enhancement Groups is authorized. The groups shall enhance game fish resources, maximizing the use of volunteers to do so. An advisory board is established to review project proposals submitted by the groups and to make recommendations to the director of the Department of Wildlife regarding funding of the projects. The advisory board, consisting of seven members, is appointed by the director, and comprises a cross-section of game fishers in the state. A dedicated account is created to fund the enhancement projects, with expenditures authorized by the director of the Department of Wildlife. Surcharges are placed on game fish licenses as follows: \$1.00 on steelhead punchcards, \$1.00 on recreational fishing licenses, and \$50.00 on fishing guide licenses. Receipts from these surcharges are placed into the dedicated account.

The Department of Wildlife and the Regional Game Fish Enhancement advisory board are required to report to the Legislature on the efforts of the Regional Game Fish Enhancement Groups at the end of each biennium, beginning October 1, 1992.

Fiscal Note: Requested January 29, 1991.

Effective Date: July 28, 1991.

Testimony For: The establishment of game fish regional enhancement groups, if as successful as the existing salmon enhancement groups, will result in an increase in game fish in the water.

Testimony Against: An additional dollar on game fish licenses that are already higher in price than salmon licenses will cause significant buyer resistance. There are already volunteer enhancement efforts in place for game fish.

Witnesses: Tom Pentt, Grays Harbor Fisheries Enhancement Task Force (in favor); Patricia Doyle, Washington Department of Wildlife (opposed); and Bill Jones, Wildcat Steelhead Club (in favor).