

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2865

*As Reported By House Committee on:
Natural Resources & Parks*

Title: An act relating to wild mushrooms.

Brief Description: Regulating the harvest of wild mushrooms.

Sponsor(s): Representatives Sheldon, Belcher, P. Johnson, Jacobsen, Fraser, Nelson, Scott, Winsley, Bowman and Anderson.

Brief History:

Reported by House Committee on:
Natural Resources & Parks, February 7, 1992, DPS.

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
NATURAL RESOURCES & PARKS**

Majority Report: *The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass.* Signed by 11 members: Representatives Belcher, Chair; Scott, Vice Chair; Beck, Ranking Minority Member; Brumsickle, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Dellwo; Fraser; Hargrove; Morton; Riley; Sheldon; and Wynne.

Staff: Randy Acker (786-7129).

Background: The harvest of wild-edible mushrooms in Washington is both a popular recreational pursuit and, in some areas, an important commercial enterprise. Over the past decade, as commercial harvest has grown, there have been concerns about the potential over-harvesting of wild edible mushrooms. Accurate data on quantities harvested has been difficult to obtain making it difficult to determine if regulations on harvest quantities are warranted.

In 1988, the Legislature enacted the Wild Mushroom Harvesting and Processing Act in order to gather data on commercial harvest. The act was subsequently amended in 1990. The act created a licensing program for the commercial mushroom industry. Under the act, mushroom buyers and dealers are required to be licensed and report the quantity of mushrooms purchased by species to the Washington State Department of Agriculture. The act also encourages recreational harvesters to report their harvesting voluntarily. Because the reporting system

depends on willingness of buyers to comply, rather than having an enforcement mechanism, there is concern that significant under-reporting occurs.

There have previously been proposals that mushrooms be treated as specialized forest products. Specialized forest products are specifically listed in current law. They include christmas trees, native ornamental trees and shrubs, evergreen foliage, cedar products, cedar salvage, processed cedar products, and cascara bark. Harvest, possession, or transportation of specialized forest products above specified minimum levels require a permit. Permits must be signed by the landowner and validated by the county sheriff. The county sheriff has primary responsibility for enforcement of these provisions.

Summary of Substitute Bill: Wild edible mushrooms are included under the definition of specialized forest products. A specialized forest products permit is required for harvest of more than three U.S. gallons of a single species of wild edible mushroom or more than an aggregate total of nine U.S. gallons of wild edible mushrooms, plus one wild edible mushroom.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The scope of the bill is narrowed to cover wild edible mushrooms, as opposed to all wild mushrooms. The volume measure of mushrooms is specified as a U.S. gallon to avoid possible confusion with an Imperial gallon.

Fiscal Note: Requested February 7, 1992.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: Significant quantities of wild edible mushrooms are harvested in Washington. Harvest intensity is such that regulation is necessary to conserve the mushroom resource. Oregon and California have already enacted conservation measures on mushroom harvesting. Classifying mushrooms as specialized forest products will help all interested groups. Landowners will be better able to control access to their lands and will have an opportunity to charge fees for the right to pick on their lands. Local commercial pickers will benefit because permit requirements will provide a disincentive for outside groups to invade local areas.

Testimony Against: None.

Witnesses: Ralph Hayford, representing a group of mycological societies (in favor); and Ron Post, Puget Sound Mycological Society.