

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SB 5675

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

Title: An act relating to Skagit river salmon.

Brief Description: Requiring a restoration plan for Skagit river salmon.

Sponsor(s): Senators Metcalf, McMullen, Anderson and Bailey.

Brief History:

Reported by House Committee on:
Fisheries & Wildlife, April 5, 1991, DPA.

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
FISHERIES & WILDLIFE**

Majority Report: *Do pass as amended.* 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:

Skagit River Fisheries

The Skagit River and its major tributaries, the Baker, Sauk and Suiattle rivers, comprise the largest watershed in the Puget Sound basin. The Department of Fisheries manages salmon in the Skagit River system on the basis of natural production. The department also has an active hatchery program at Marblemount, producing coho salmon, spring, fall, and summer chinook salmon, and chum salmon. In recent years, chum, pink, natural summer/fall chinook, and steelhead returns to the Skagit have been generally healthy and meeting spawning escapement goals. However, the health of natural Skagit coho and spring chinook and hatchery summer/fall chinook has been of recent concern.

The Department of Fisheries has been involved in some efforts to improve the health of the Skagit River salmon, including the currently ongoing comprehensive planning effort for coho management and the implementation of the

legislatively mandated Watershed Enhancement Plan. In addition, by January 1, 1992, the department will complete the final Salmon 2000 plan to double the statewide salmon catch by the year 2000. However, no recovery plan is in place for these salmon stocks.

Skagit County Timber Dependence

Timber harvest levels, particularly on federal lands, are expected to decrease significantly. This will adversely impact the State generally and timber communities specifically.

The estimated job losses resulting from the reduced harvest level vary significantly. The governor's office estimates the direct and indirect job losses at 20,000; the House Timber Task Force estimated the job losses at 26,000.

Training and retraining programs, most of which are administered by the state Department of Employment Security and funded through the federal Job Training Partnership Act, can benefit timber-dependent communities. An example of this is job dislocation assistance.

Skagit County is one of seven counties that the governor's office has listed as being most dependent on timber for their economic livelihood.

Summary of Amended Bill: Legislative findings include: the recovery and enhancement of Skagit River salmon should receive high priority; and, dislocated timber workers represent a potential workforce to conduct salmon enhancement projects, if adequate training is provided.

The director of the Department of Fisheries is to prepare a salmon recovery plan for the Skagit River. The plan shall incorporate the best available technology in order to achieve maximum restoration of depressed salmon stocks. The utilization of salmon hatchery programs must be an important component of the recovery plan. The plan must encourage the restoration of natural spawning areas and natural rearing of salmon but must not preclude the development of an active hatchery program.

The director shall present the recovery plan to the Legislature on or before December 31, 1991. The plan is to include funding requirements for salmon hatchery programs and natural spawning programs.

The Natural Resource Worker Project is established as a pilot project in Skagit County to provide jobs for dislocated timber workers. The project is administered by

the state Employment Security Department. The Department of Personnel shall approve the project.

The project is designed to establish training and employment opportunities for dislocated timber workers to obtain entry level jobs relating to the enhancement of Skagit River salmon in the state departments of Ecology, Fisheries, Natural Resources, Wildlife, and the state Parks and Recreation Commission. The project is contingent upon the availability of federal funding, or an appropriation from the state general fund. The agencies participating in the Natural Resource Worker Project shall provide an annual report to the state Legislature. The project shall terminate on July 1, 1996.

A five year pilot project is established to provide education and training for dislocated timber workers and their spouses. The project is coordinated jointly by the state Employment Security Department and Skagit Valley Community College. The project is contingent upon the acquisition of funds by the department and college.

The education and training program will be developed by Skagit Valley Community College in consultation with the state departments of Ecology, Fisheries, Natural Resources, Wildlife, the state Parks and Recreation Commission, and other Skagit County employers to determine minimum employment qualifications in the areas of natural resource management and enhancement of Skagit River salmon.

The Employment Security Department is to contract with the Economic Development Association of Skagit County to coordinate with the college and the state departments of Ecology, Fisheries, Natural Resources, Wildlife, the state Parks and Recreation Commission, and other Skagit County employers to assist dislocated timber workers and their spouses in securing education and employment in the natural resource professions.

The Employment Security Department and the Skagit Valley Community College shall provide an annual report to the state Legislature.

The act expires January 1, 1997.

Amended Bill Compared to Original Bill: The amended bill retains all the provisions of the original bill which require that the Department of Fisheries develop a recovery plan for Skagit River salmon. The amended bill adds the establishment of the Natural Resource Worker Pilot Project in Skagit County and the establishment of a pilot training program at Skagit Valley Community College. Both pilot

projects are designed for dislocated timber workers to develop skills in the natural resource professions specifically related to Skagit River salmon enhancement.

Fiscal Note: Available. New fiscal note requested on April 5, 1991.

Effective Date of Amended Bill: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect July 15, 1991.

Testimony For: The health of the Skagit River salmon stocks affect both the river fishery and the ocean fishery, since this is a weak stock. There have been problems with natural production. There is no current formalized plan in place. There are no fish in the river, and planning would help. Everything begins with a plan.

Testimony Against: None.

Witnesses: Senator Jack Metcalf, prime sponsor (in favor); Tolmi Maki, Gray's Harbor Gillnetters (in favor); Susan Markey, Department of Fisheries (in favor); Bill Jones, Wildcat Steelhead Club (in favor); and Steve Arbaugh, Puget Sound Gillnetters (in favor).