

HOUSE BILL REPORT

E2SSB 5753

*As Passed House
April 18, 1991*

Title: An act relating to upland wildlife habitats and populations.

Brief Description: Making major efforts to improve habitat for upland birds.

Sponsor(s): Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Oke, Bauer, Owen, Craswell, Metcalf, Roach, Nelson, L. Smith, Amondson and Thorsness).

Brief History:

Reported by House Committee on:
Fisheries & Wildlife, April 4, 1991, DP;
Revenue, April 6, 1991, DPA;
Passed House, April 18, 1991, 64-34.

**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).

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
REVENUE**

Majority Report: *Do pass as amended.* Signed by 10 members: Representatives Wang, Chair; Fraser, Vice Chair; Holland, Ranking Minority Member; Wynne, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Brumsickle; Day; Leonard; Morton; Phillips; and Rust.

Minority Report: *Do not pass.* Signed by 2 members: Representatives Belcher and Van Luven.

Staff: Rick Peterson (785-7150).

Background:

Pheasant Management

Pheasants reproduce naturally on the east side of Washington, given adequate habitat. Depressed populations of pheasants on the east side, associated with improved agricultural technology, have focused attention of wildlife managers on habitat enhancement. The Washington State Ecosystems Conservation Project is a recent effort to acquire and improve habitat for upland wildlife and wetlands, and is focused on the east side. On the west side of the state, hunting opportunities are provided by releases from game farms, since pheasants do not reproduce sufficiently well in the wetter west side climate to support a huntable population. Two game farms, in Lewis County and on Whidbey Island, have been operated by the Department of Wildlife for the purposes of pheasant release. Potential budget shortfalls threaten the continued operation of these game farms, and the department has been examining ways to secure sufficient funding for their continuance. The department has worked with bird hunting constituents to reach three funding alternatives, all of which include permit fee increases.

Pheasant Licenses and Fees

In eastern Washington, an \$8.00 upland bird permit is required to hunt pheasant, quail, and partridge in eastern Washington. A western Washington upland bird permit is required to hunt pheasant, quail, and partridge in western Washington, at a cost of \$15.00.

In the current legislative session, House Bill 1850 addresses fee increases for Department of Wildlife issued licenses, and raises the east side and west side permit fees to \$10.00 and \$19.00, respectively.

Summary of Bill: The Legislature finds that the state's upland wildlife habitats are in transition and that preservation of upland wildlife habitat will require greater protection and maintenance. The Legislature finds that there is an increased need for acquisition and management of public and private habitat areas. The Legislature recognizes that the Department of Wildlife is establishing an Upland Wildlife Habitat Advisory Council and that this council should have membership that will affect various interested parties. It is the intent of the Legislature that the Department of Wildlife will work with this council in furtherance of the study required by this act and other issues.

The Department of Wildlife is to prepare a study and report to the Legislature by January 1992. The study shall address

the following: 1) increases in both public and private habitat acquisitions directly related to the joint federal and state ecosystems project; 2) increased partnerships between the Department of Wildlife and county, state and federal agencies, land owners, conservation organizations and the citizens of the state; 3) restoration of critical upland habitats by acquisition and enhancement of private lands; 4) implementation of good neighbor policies relating to the stewardship of acquired and restored upland bird lands; 5) recommendations regarding future efforts necessary to promote the state's ecosystems program; 6) status of upland bird populations and recreation opportunities; 7) improvements and associated costs with respect to both eastern and western Washington upland bird programs including predator control; 8) enhanced use of citizen volunteers; 9) enhancement of and the need for additional bird farms in both eastern and western Washington; 10) the status of the upland bird release program in other states; 11) the development of a program to encourage and assist agricultural and rangeland owners to maintain sufficient upland wildlife habitat; 12) development of an enforcement plan that will enhance enforcement of the unlawful taking of upland birds and provide stricter adherence to bag limits; 13) a wildlife habitat assessment for eastern Washington that will include operation and maintenance costs for acquired and managed properties; 14) provision of information demonstrating the upland bird population trends and hunter harvest data for both eastern and western Washington; and 15) recommendations for supplemental licensing and fees for the hunting of upland birds that will support the hunting program.

The permit fee is increased from \$15.00 for the western Washington upland game bird permit. The fee shall be \$35.00 for all licenses beginning July 1, 1991, through January 1, 1992. Effective January 1, 1992, the permit shall be available as one of four options: full season, early season, late season, and two-day. For the full season permit the fee shall be \$35.00 or \$20.00 for juveniles. For the early season permit the fee shall be \$25.00; for the late season permit the fee shall be \$25.00; and, for a two-day permit the fee shall be \$20.00. Persons under the age of 15 shall be considered juveniles for the purposes of this act.

The Wildlife Commission shall establish, by rule, an enforcement punchcard to be used for the hunting of pheasants in western Washington.

The act is null and void unless specifically funded in the 1991-93 Omnibus Appropriations Act, and unless SHB 1250 and SHB 1850 are enacted before July 1, 1991. An intent statement clarifies that the fees for western Washington

upland game bird permits identified in this act will take effect irrespective of the enactment of SHB 1850.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: (Fisheries & Wildlife): Habitat and associated hunting success for upland game birds is declining. This will allow the Department of Wildlife to be self-supporting in their game farm program.

(Revenue): The money from the fee will pay for the operation of the two state game bird farms.

Testimony Against: (Fisheries & Wildlife): The upland game bird permit fee increase is in conflict with the license fee increase bill, HB 1850.

(Revenue): None.

Witnesses: (Fisheries & Wildlife): Senator Bob Oke, prime sponsor (in favor); and Pam Madsen, Department of Wildlife (opposed; supports the study portion of the bill but the proposed fee increase conflicts with fee increase legislation that is currently in the process).

(Revenue): Senator Bob Oke, in favor.