SENATE BILL REPORT

ESHB 2626

AS OF FEBRUARY 19, 1992

Brief Description: Conserving and enhancing wild stocks of salmonids.

SPONSORS: House Committee on Fisheries & Wildlife (originally sponsored by Representatives R. King, May, Orr, Rust, Belcher, Fraser, Hochstatter, Horn, Morris, R. Meyers, Basich, Jones, Sheldon, Leonard, Franklin, Zellinsky, Valle, Pruitt, O'Brien, Nelson, Bowman, Brough, Jacobsen, Haugen, Rasmussen and J. Kohl)

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES & WILDLIFE

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT & NATURAL RESOURCES

Staff: Ross Antipa (786-7413)

Hearing Dates: February 26, 1992

BACKGROUND:

Columbia River Salmon and the Endangered Species Act (ESA)

In April and June of 1990, petitions were filed by the Shoshone-Bannock tribe in Idaho, Oregon Trout and five other organizations under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) to list five wild stocks of Columbia River salmon as threatened or endangered. These stocks were: Snake River sockeye, Snake River spring, summer, and fall chinook, and lower Columbia River coho. The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) is the federal agency with jurisdiction over endangered fish species. In April and June of 1991, NMFS proposed that three of the five stocks of salmon be listed under the Endangered Species Act. These stocks are the Snake River sockeye salmon (proposed as endangered), the Snake River fall chinook (proposed as threatened), and the Snake River spring/summer chinook (proposed as threatened). On November 14, 1991, NMFS officially listed the Snake River sockeye as endangered. Decisions on the other two stocks are expected shortly.

Recovery Planning

The Northwest Power Planning Council, in response to the proposed listings, developed a management plan in December 1991 for salmon on the Columbia and Snake Rivers, which will be used by the National Marine Fisheries Service as a basis for their recovery plan for the endangered sockeye salmon. There is currently no mandatory or ongoing recovery effort for wild stocks of salmon, steelhead and cutthroat trout that have

not been petitioned for listing under the Endangered Species Act. There are many other wild salmon, steelhead, and sea-run cutthroat trout stocks that have been identified as declining by the American Fisheries Society. Forty-one of these are in Washington, outside of the Columbia River Basin.

Management Techniques for Increasing Wild Fish Runs

The Department of Wildlife regulates the recreational harvest of resident fish including steelhead trout and sea-run cutthroat trout. The Department of Fisheries regulates the harvest of the commercial and recreational salmon fisheries for non-treaty fishers. Both agencies coordinate with the tribes in developing commercial harvest regulations. Regulations are designed to provide harvest opportunities and sustain fish runs.

The Northwest Power Planning Council, in its Phase II Amendment, proposed a reduction in harvest of fall chinook in the Columbia river. Part of the mechanism for accomplishing this will be by providing for a commercial license leaseback program. The federal government will assist in paying to temporarily lease back commercial fishing licenses. Current Washington law requires that a commercial fisher, in order to renew a salmon license, catch one fish. The director of the Department of Fisheries has the authority to waive this requirement if the fisher has not had the opportunity to catch fish, such as would occur if a fisher participated in the leaseback program.

Marking and Catch and Release

Where a distinction between wild and hatchery stocks needs to be made for the purpose of allowing wild fish, if caught, to be released, the hatchery fish may be marked by clipping the adipose fin, using a coded wire tag, or using a newer ocular marking technique. The Department of Wildlife has marked most of its hatchery raised steelhead and sea-run cutthroat trout and is therefore able to implement catch and release regulations for recreational fishers. For almost all of the steelhead and sea-run cutthroat stocks identified by the American Fisheries Society as stocks of concern, these regulations are already in place. The Department of Fisheries has not marked all hatchery fish. Even if all were marked, the utility in returning wild fish caught commercially with current techniques is low, since these fish caught in nets are usually dead shortly after the nets are hauled in. The recreational fishery could be managed for catch and release if all hatchery raised salmon were marked.

Captive Broodstock and Wild Stock Supplementation

Wild salmonids spawn in river gravel. Their progeny reside in freshwater until ready to go to the ocean, where they mature. As adults, they return to their natal streams to spawn. Fish produced in hatcheries are artificially spawned by removing eggs from the female and raising the young fish and releasing them to travel downstream as smolts. New technologies are

being developed to use artificial production means to supplement wild populations of salmonids with fish that are genetically of the same wild stock. One technique, called captive broodstock rearing, raises the fish from egg to mature adult, rearing in saltwater if necessary by using saltwater net pens. That adult is spawned artificially. Wild stock supplementation is the process of using eggs from the wild stock that one wants to supplement, by taking the fish out of the wild, rearing the progeny, and releasing the progeny back into the natal stream from which the parents originated. The Department of Wildlife has sea-run cutthroat captive broodstock programs in Shelton and Aberdeen, which have been implemented in the last five years. Many stocks of sea-run cutthroat on coastal streams have been identified by the American Fisheries Society as being stocks of concern.

SUMMARY:

The Departments of Fisheries and Wildlife are directed to establish a wild salmonid review and inventory team consisting of fisheries biologists and geneticists. The team is to review and inventory the status of wild salmonid stocks outside of the Columbia River basin. The team is to conduct the following activities:

(1) Develop a definition of stock;

(2) Determine the status of all wild salmonid stocks in Washington outside of the Columbia River basin; and

(3) Outline a process for developing a recovery plan and objectives for each wild salmonid stock. The review and inventory team is to provide the appropriate legislative committees, by June 30, 1993, with stock status reports and a recovery plan process.

The Department of Wildlife, by January 1, 1993, is directed to implement an experimental captive broodstock program on a coastal river to be selected by the department for wild sea-run cutthroat trout.

The Department of Fisheries, by December 31, 1992, is to determine the cost of marking all hatchery fish at all department operated hatchery facilities.

The director of the Department of Fisheries is directed to use authority granted under existing law to waive requirements for commercial fishing license renewal, in order to accomplish the goals of the license leaseback program of the Northwest Power Planning Council, described in the Council's Phase II Amendment to its Fish and Wildlife Program.

The act is null and void unless specific funding is provided in the 1992 Supplemental Budget Act, referencing this act by bill number.

Appropriation: none

Revenue: none

Fiscal Note: requested February 6, 1992