

SENATE BILL REPORT

E2SSB 5753

AS PASSED SENATE, MARCH 18, 1991

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

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

SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT & NATURAL RESOURCES

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5753 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Metcalf, Chairman; Oke, Vice Chairman; Amondson, Barr, Conner, Owen, Patterson, and Snyder.

Staff: Vic Moon (786-7469)

Hearing Dates: February 19, 1991; February 25, 1991

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Majority Report: That Second Substitute Senate Bill No. 5753 be substituted therefor, and the second substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators McDonald, Chairman; Craswell, Vice Chairman; Bailey, Bauer, Gaspard, Johnson, L. Kreidler, Metcalf, Murray, Newhouse, Niemi, Rinehart, Saling, L. Smith, Talmadge, West, Williams, and Wojahn.

Staff: Michael Groesch (786-7715)

Hearing Dates: March 6, 1991; March 7, 1991

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES & WILDLIFE

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON REVENUE

BACKGROUND:

The Department of Wildlife has indicated that the two state pheasant rearing farms on Whidbey Island and in Lewis County may have to be closed because of budget considerations.

SUMMARY:

The Legislature finds that the state's upland wildlife habitats are in transition and that the state's population increases preservation of upland wildlife habitat will require greater protection and maintenance. The Legislature finds that there's an increased need for acquisition and management

of habitat areas, both public and private. 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 review other issues that are related to upland habitat, especially for pheasant.

The Department of Wildlife will prepare a study and report to the Legislature by January 1992. The study will address the following programs and information relating to upland bird populations and the restoration of habitat in the following areas: 1) increases in both public and private habitat acquisitions; 2) increase partnership 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 through a strategic acquisition and complementary enhancement of private lands; 4) implementation of good neighbor policies relating to the stewardship of acquired and restored upland bird lands; 5) review recommendations regarding future efforts necessary to promote the state's ecosystems program; 6) review the upland bird populations and recreational opportunities with respect to these populations; 7) analyze improvements and associated costs with respect to both eastern and western Washington upland bird programs including predator control; 8) review enhanced use of citizen volunteers; 9) existing game farms on Whidbey Island and in Lewis County will be maintained and the productivity of these facilities and the need for additional bird farms in both eastern and western Washington will be studied; 10) there will be an evaluation of the status of the upland bird release program in other states; 11) the department will develop a program to encourage and assist agricultural and rangeland owners to maintain sufficient upland wildlife habitat; 12) there will be a development of an enforcement plan that will enhance enforcement of the unlawful taking of upland birds and provide stricter adherents to bag limits; 13) there will be wildlife habitat assessment for eastern Washington that will include operation and maintenance cost for acquired and managed properties; 14) the department will provide information demonstrating the upland bird population trends and hunter harvest data for both eastern and western Washington; and, 15) the department will recommend supplemental licensing and fees for the hunting of upland birds that will support the hunting program.

A renewal fee is established for the western Washington Upland Bird Hunting License. The fee will be \$35 for all licenses from the effective date of the act through January 1, 1992. Following January 1, 1992, the permit shall be available as a full season option, an early season option and a late season option. For the full season the fee will be \$35, for the early season the fee will be \$25, for the late season the fee will be \$25, for a juvenile season-long permit the fee will be \$20, and a two-day consecutive hunting permit will be \$20.

Persons under the age of 15 will be considered juveniles for the purposes of this act.

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

The bill will not go into effect unless funded in the 1991-93 general operating budget.

Appropriation: none

Revenue: yes

Fiscal Note: requested

TESTIMONY FOR (Environment & Natural Resources):

Increased user funding is needed to operate the pheasant farms in western Washington. The Department of Wildlife needs to review the whole upland bird program in eastern and western Washington.

TESTIMONY AGAINST (Environment & Natural Resources): None

TESTIFIED (Environment & Natural Resources): Jeff Parson, National Audubon Society; Ron Peregrin, Ruth Poelker, Department of Wildlife; George Prescott

TESTIMONY FOR (Ways & Means):

Maintenance of upland bird hunting is important to the state's economy and quality of life.

TESTIMONY AGAINST (Ways & Means): None

TESTIFIED (Ways & Means): Senator Oke (pro)

HOUSE AMENDMENT(S):

An emergency clause is added and the fees will take effect July 1, 1991. An intent section is added making the increased fees apply to the western Washington upland game bird program. A null and void clause is added providing that unless SHB 1850 (hunting and fishing fees) and SHB 1250 (nonconsumptive wildlife use) are enacted, the bill will not become law.