

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1883

As Reported By House Committee On:
Fisheries & Wildlife

Title: An act relating to salmon enhancement.

Brief Description: Providing for salmon enhancement.

Sponsors: Representatives King, R. Meyers and Jones.

Brief History:

Reported by House Committee on:
Fisheries & Wildlife, March 2, 1993, DPA.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES & WILDLIFE

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 5 members:
Representatives King, Chair; Orr, Vice Chair; Basich;
Lemmon; and Scott.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 3 members:
Representatives Fuhrman, Ranking Minority Member; Sehlin,
Assistant Ranking Minority Member; and Foreman.

Staff: Keitlyn Watson (786-7310).

Background: The Regional Fisheries Enhancement Groups (RFEGs) were authorized by the Legislature in 1989, and a dedicated fund was established by the Legislature for these groups in 1990. Funds are generated from a surcharge on recreational and commercial salmon fishing licenses sold by the Department of Fisheries, and are deposited into the Regional Fisheries Enhancement Group Account. In addition, eggs and carcasses from salmon that return to a facility developed as an enhancement by the RFEGs may be sold by the groups, and the proceeds deposited into the RFEG account. Current law does not allow funds from this account to be used as replacement funding for Department of Fisheries operated salmon projects that existed on January 1, 1991.

The Department of Fisheries also sells surplus salmon eggs and carcasses from its facilities. The revenues from these sales go to the general fund. The department does not currently authorize sales of these salmon eggs and carcasses by RFEGs, nor does the department currently authorize the groups to conduct terminal area hatchery harvests of surplus returns.

Summary of Amended Bill: Regional Fisheries Enhancement Group account funds may be used to replace funding for Department of Fisheries salmon projects, if those projects are operated by RFEGs. If authorized by the Department of Fisheries, RFEGs may sell excess state hatchery salmon eggs and carcasses and use the proceeds only to fund projects that support artificially and naturally produced salmon, restore or improve habitat, or identify ways to increase the survival of salmon. The Department of Fisheries may contract with RFEGs to operate and maintain state hatcheries, if such contract does not cause any state employee at an affected hatchery to lose employment.

Amended Bill Compared to Original Bill: The amended bill removes a provision that authorizes the Department of Fisheries to allow RFEGs to conduct terminal hatchery harvests to fund enhancement projects.

Fiscal Note: Requested March 2, 1993.

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

Testimony For: (on original bill) The bill supports the work of RFEGs, and will help to revitalize the natural resource based economy in Washington, including coastal communities suffering from loss of timber industry. RFEGs will not compete with commercial fishing enterprises.

Testimony Against: (on original bill) Technical problems with the bill's wording raise concern that fish may be lost to commercial fisheries, both tribal and non-tribal. In particular, "terminal area" needs to be defined more narrowly. The bill may adversely impact the operating budget of the Department of Fisheries by allowing RFEGs to keep proceeds of sales of state hatchery surplus. The bill represents a significant change in statewide policy, and should not be adopted without looking at statewide ramifications. The bill may affect the department's ability to meet the needs of wild stocks. The bill may provide an incentive for an RFEG operating a state hatchery to create hatchery surplus.

Witnesses: (on original bill) Diane Ellison, Chehalis Basin Fisheries Task Force (pro); Russ Richardson, Port of Grays Harbor (pro); Ed Manary, Department of Fisheries (con); Don Stuart, Salmon for Washington (con); Ed Owens, Coalition of Washington Ocean Fishermen (con); Mark Ashley, Willapa Fisheries Enhancement Group (con); Roger Atwood, Washington Trollers Association (con); Dan Swecker, Washington Fish Growers Association (pro); and Randy Scott, Quinault Indian Nation (concerns).