

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 5874

As Reported By House Committee On:
Fisheries & Wildlife

Title: An act relating to improving recreational fishing.

Brief Description: Improving recreational fishing.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Natural Resources (originally sponsored by Senators Owen, Oke, Haugen, Hargrove, Erwin, Snyder, Franklin, Spanel, Sutherland, Sellar, McDonald, Bauer and Winsley).

Brief History:

Reported by House Committee on:
Fisheries & Wildlife, March 25, 1993, DPA.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES & WILDLIFE

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 8 members: Representatives King, Chair; Orr, Vice Chair; Sehlin, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Basich; Chappell; Foreman; Lemmon; and Scott.

Staff: Keitlyn Watson (786-7310).

Background: Currently, although there are positions and programs within the Department of Fisheries (WDF) that address the needs of sport fishers, there is no designated position in the WDF that focuses solely on these needs. There is also no dedicated fund devoted solely to sport fishing enhancement. There is concern that sport fishing opportunity in salmon and marine bottomfish is declining, particularly in Puget Sound and the Straits of Juan de Fuca. Some feel that a sport fishing administrator, by focusing on short and long term artificial enhancement projects, can help to improve recreational fishing opportunity.

Summary of Amended Bill: The Department of Fisheries is directed to develop the Puget Sound Recreational Salmon and Marine Fish Enhancement Program, and to identify a coordinator for the program. The coordinator shall: 1) coordinate the activities of the program; 2) provide reports as needed to the Legislature and the public; and 3) work within and outside of WDF to achieve the goals stated in the act.

The WDF is directed to:

- 1) develop a short-term program of hatchery-based salmon enhancement, using freshwater pond sites for rearing;
- 2) solicit support from regional enhancement groups and other organizations;
- 3) conduct research on salmon production opportunities;
- 4) conduct research on marine bottomfish production;
- 5) fully implement enhancement efforts for Puget Sound and Hood Canal resident salmon and marine bottomfish;
- 6) identify opportunities to reestablish salmon runs in areas where they no longer exist;
- 7) encourage naturally spawning salmon to develop to the fullest possible extent; and
- 8) fully utilize hatchery programs to improve recreational fishing.

The WDF is further directed to seek recommendations from experts in recreational fisheries enhancement, including the University of Washington's College of Fisheries and Sea Grant Program; to undertake research into enhancement techniques, hooking mortality rates, mass marking methods, catch models, and sources of bottomfish mortality; and to develop facilities in 1994 for rearing delayed-release chinook salmon, in each of the following locations: south Puget Sound, central Puget Sound, north Puget Sound, and Hood Canal. Pond sites are to be preferred to net pens. The goal is to produce 3,000,000 chinook salmon annually by the year 2000.

A public awareness program is to be developed by the WDF on the recreational fishing program. The department shall recruit volunteers to implement recreational fishing projects.

The department is to increase efforts to document predation on salmon and bottomfish by birds, predatory fish and marine mammals, and explore opportunities to convince the federal government to amend the Marine Mammal Protection Act to allow for lethal removal of marine mammals and to control predatory birds.

The department is directed to invite Indian tribal fishing interests as well as non-Indian commercial fishing groups to participate in planning selective fisheries, and to explore the feasibility of achieving greater production by changing rearing programs in the department's chinook and coho hatcheries.

The Puget Sound Recreational Salmon and Marine Fish Enhancement Program shall be coordinated so as not to conflict with the department's wild stock initiative.

The department is directed to develop plans for increasing recreational access to salmon and marine resources, and to contract with private consultants, aquatic farms, or construction firms, where appropriate, to achieve the highest benefit-to-cost ratio for recreational fishing projects.

The department is directed to develop proposed legislation for a Recreational Fishing Capital Facilities Improvement Program financed through general obligation bonds, and to present this legislation to the Legislature by January 1, 1994.

The Recreational Fisheries Enhancement Account is created in the state treasury. An annual recreational surcharge of \$10 is added to recreational salmon and marine bottomfish licenses in Puget Sound and the Strait of Juan de Fuca. All receipts from the \$10 surcharge will be deposited into this account. An appropriation of \$500,000 is made from the general fund to the account, to be repaid from the surcharge. Expenditures from this account may only be used for recreational fisheries enhancement programs.

Amended Bill Compared to Substitute Bill: The amendment removes the requirement that the Department of Fisheries create a specific sport fishing program administrator position, and substitutes a requirement that the department create the Puget Sound Recreational Salmon and Marine Fish Enhancement Program, and to identify a coordinator for the program. In addition to coordinating the program, the coordinator is to provide reports as needed to the Legislature and the public, and to work within and outside of the department to achieve the goals stated in the act. Responsibility for short term and long term enhancement is given to the department rather than to the individual responsible for the program.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Appropriation: \$500,000 from the general fund, to be repaid from the surcharge.

Effective Date of Amended Bill: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect July 1, 1993.

Testimony For: This is possibly the most significant measure for sport fishing enhancement ever considered by the Legislature. There is growing recognition of a crisis in

diminishing salmon and marine fish populations, and the bill has wide support. Implementation of the bill will increase the number of fish, so that sport fishers are not competing with commercial and tribal fishers. The state benefits economically from sport fishing, and enhancement could bring in tourist dollars. The bill will result in more fish, and will lead to development of ties between volunteers, the public sector and the private sector, generally increasing public awareness of the need to protect habitat. Sport fishers support the surcharge and might even be willing to pay more, as long as the revenues are dedicated to sport fishing enhancement.

Testimony Against: None.

Witnesses: Senator Brad Owen, prime sponsor (pro); Ed Manary, Department of Fisheries (supports concept, has concerns as written and suggested amendments which were adopted by the committee in the amended bill; no position on surcharge); Barbara Lindsay, Northwest Sportfishing Industry Association (pro); Jim Curley (pro); Jay Rusling, Puget Sound Anglers (pro); Ross Warren, Puget Sound Anglers (pro, with concerns: If the enhancement works, tribal and non-tribal commercial fisheries may eventually target the enhanced populations, which the sport fishers will have paid for.); Jack Ballard, Recreational Fishing Coalition (pro); Terry Wright, fish biologist (pro, with concerns: Enhancement efforts might not be effective in areas such as south Puget Sound, where habitat is not available. Research into production limitations should be done for salmonids as well as bottomfish. The goal of the release program should be to increase harvest rather than production. The bill may produce an unnecessary duplication of effort unless coordination with Regional Fisheries Enhancement Groups is planned); and Jack Swanberg, Northwest Marine Trade Association (pro, with concern: Revenues spent for water access may duplicate State Parks & Recreation water access activities; agencies need to coordinate or else the surcharge revenues might end up in the general fund).