

SENATE BILL REPORT

EHJM 4003

AS REPORTED BY COMMITTEE ON ENERGY & UTILITIES, MARCH 29, 1993

Brief Description: Concerning the preservation of salmon.

SPONSORS: Representatives Mastin, Rayburn, Lisk, Sheahan, Grant, Bray, Ludwig, Chandler, Schoesler, Ballard, Foreman, Roland, Edmondson, Lemmon and Hansen

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & RURAL DEVELOPMENT

SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY & UTILITIES

Majority Report: Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators Sutherland, Chairman; Jesernig, Vice Chairman; Amondson, Hochstatter, McCaslin, Vognild, and Williams.

Staff: Phil Moeller (786-7445)

Hearing Dates: March 29, 1993

BACKGROUND:

In December 1991, the federal government listed stocks of Snake River sockeye salmon as being "endangered" under the federal Endangered Species Act. In May 1992, Snake River spring/summer and fall chinook were listed as being "threatened" under the act.

The Northwest Power Planning Council, state and federal agencies, and others have been taking actions to improve fish passage, screening, and other protection facilities in various parts of the Columbia and Snake River basins. The Corps of Engineers expected improved juvenile fish bypass facilities to be operational by the end of 1992 at six dams on the mainstems of the Columbia and Snake rivers. Two additional facilities are expected to be operational by 1998.

Some proposals for enhancing fish passage involve increasing the water velocities in and near reservoirs. From March 1 through March 31 of last year, the Corps of Engineers conducted a test to examine the effect of reducing reservoir size, or "drawing down" reservoirs, on water velocities and physical structures. The reservoirs behind Lower Granite and Little Goose dams on the lower Snake River were lowered below their minimum operating levels. Navigation through the locks at the dams is precluded at these levels.

SUMMARY:

The President of the United States, Congress, the National Marine Fisheries Service, and the civil works division of the U.S. Army are requested to limit drawdowns on the Columbia-Snake River system to the minimum operating pools unless, based on scientific knowledge, further drawdowns are biologically prudent and represent the minimum economic cost among equally effective alternatives.

SUMMARY OF PROPOSED SENATE AMENDMENT:

A striking amendment was adopted requesting the President of the United States, Congress, the director of the National Marine Fisheries Service, and the assistant secretary for civil works of the United States Army to carefully consider the biological needs of endangered salmon species and strongly consider the economic impact on Washington citizens before drawdowns are made below minimum operating pools.

Appropriations: none

Revenue: none

Fiscal Note: none requested

TESTIMONY FOR:

This memorial will help send a message that any drawdowns below minimum operating levels could have major economic impacts on the state.

TESTIMONY AGAINST: None

TESTIFIED: Scott Taylor, WPPA (pro); Dave McCraney, WDTD, Drawdown Committee, Governor's office (pro on amendment)