

HOUSE BILL REPORT

2SSB 5886

As Reported By House Committee On:
Natural Resources

Title: An act relating to the regional fisheries enhancement program.

Brief Description: Providing a stable funding source for fisheries enhancement and habitat restoration.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Strannigan, Swecker, Jacobsen and Oke).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Natural Resources: 4/1/97, 4/4/97 [DPA].

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 7 members: Representatives Buck, Chairman; Sump, Vice Chairman; Thompson, Vice Chairman; Alexander; Anderson; Chandler and Hatfield.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 3 members: Representatives Regala, Ranking Minority Member; Butler, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; and Pennington.

Staff: Rick Anderson (786-7114).

Background: Regional fisheries enhancement groups are nonprofit groups that work on projects related to habitat improvement and salmon production. There are 12 enhancement groups around the state.

Funds dedicated for use by the enhancement groups include a \$1 surcharge on each recreational personal use food fish license, a \$100 surcharge on each commercial salmon fishery license, salmon delivery license, and salmon charter license, and a \$20 surcharge on each salmon fishing guide license. Revenues also include the sale of salmon eggs and carcasses. These funds are deposited into the Regional Fisheries Enhancement Group Account. Only the director of the Department of Fish and Wildlife or the director's designee may authorize expenditures from this account. No appropriation is required for expenditures. The Department of Fish and Wildlife is

authorized to use up to 20 percent of this account to fund staff to provide technical assistance to the enhancement groups.

The Regional Fisheries Enhancement Group Advisory Board was created by the Legislature to advise the director of the Department of Fish and Wildlife on a number of fish management issues of concern to the department and to regional fisheries enhancement groups.

The current steelhead license fee is \$18. To fish for steelhead a person must also purchase a game fish license; the fee for this license is \$17. The Department of General Administration administers the sale of surplus salmon eggs and carcasses for the Department of Fish and Wildlife. The fee for this service is 25 percent of the contract sale value. Legislation enacted in 1991 lists accounts within the general fund or the Treasurer's Trust Fund that are to receive the earnings from investments, less payments for certain administrative costs. If an account is not listed, the interest earnings are credited to the general fund.

Summary of Amended Bill: Legislative findings are made regarding the benefit of regional fisheries enhancement groups.

The Regional Fisheries Enhancement Group Advisory Board must conduct a study of federal, state, and local permitting requirements that affect fishery enhancement and habitat restoration projects. The board must recommend ways to streamline and improve the permitting process to the natural resource committees of the House and Senate by November 1, 1997.

The mandate of regional fisheries enhancement groups is broadened to include steelhead. A surcharge of \$25 is established on the purchase of fishing guide licenses and on anadromous game fish buyers licenses. Revenue from the surcharges must be deposited into the regional fisheries enhancement group account. One dollar from the sale of each steelhead license must also be deposited into this account.

A Regional Fisheries Enhancement Salmonid Recovery Account is created to accept unidentified state and federal sources. This account is subject to legislative appropriation. A salmonid recovery account is created to accept private contributions. This account is not subject to legislative appropriation. Both accounts are dedicated to regional fisheries enhancement projects.

Regional fisheries enhancement groups can receive startup funds to initiate projects. Interest from the regional fisheries enhancement group account and the regional fisheries enhancement salmonid recovery account remain in these accounts.

The fee charged by the Department of General Administration for administering the sale of surplus salmon eggs and carcasses is limited to 5 percent of the contract sale value.

Amended Bill Compared to Second Substitute Bill: The striking amendment deletes a provision establishing a cooperative habitat incentive program between state resource agencies and landowners. The striking amendment deletes a provision establishing a \$1 surcharge on steelhead licenses and directs that \$1 dollar of the existing steelhead license fee be dedicated to fisheries enhancement projects. In addition, the striking amendment adds two new accounts, allows the interest accrued from two enhancement accounts to remain in those accounts, and limits the Department of General Administration's fee for salmon egg and carcass sales.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Amended Bill: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.

Testimony For: The striking amendment makes needed improvements to the existing enhancement program. Regional enhancement groups need startup funds to initiate some projects. The bill provides needed change to the current program. There are a decreasing number of steelhead fishers. Increasing the mandate of enhancement groups to include steelhead will help to improve the steelhead resource and encourage new fishers. A new account is needed to encourage private contributions. The fee charged by the Department of General Administration should be reduced. The new account should not be subject to legislative appropriation. All of the accrued interest from the enhancement accounts should remain in these accounts.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: John Kelly, King County Outdoor Sports Council; Mike Kuttel, Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife; Terry Wright, Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission; Ric Abbett, Trout Unlimited; Larry Oathout, SPSSEG; and Willy O'Neill, Stilly Snohomish Fish Task Force (all in favor).