

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2100

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: Representatives Buck and Hatfield.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Natural Resources: 3/4/97, 3/5/97 [DPS].

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Buck, Chairman; Sump, Vice Chairman; Thompson, Vice Chairman; Regala, Ranking Minority Member; Alexander; Anderson; Chandler; Hatfield and Sheldon.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 1 member: Representative Pennington.

Staff: Rick Anderson (786-7114).

Background: Regional fisheries enhancement groups were established by the Legislature in 1989. Currently there are 12 enhancement groups. The groups work on projects to improve salmon habitat and production.

Funds for the enhancement groups come from a \$1 surcharge on each recreational personal use food fish license and a \$100 surcharge on each commercial salmon fishery license, salmon delivery license, and salmon charter license. Revenue from the sale of salmon carcasses and eggs that return to enhancement group facilities is also made available to the enhancement group that produced the salmon. Funds from these revenue sources are deposited into the Regional Fisheries Enhancement Group Account. Only the Fish and Wildlife Commission or the commission's designee may authorize expenditures from this account. No appropriation is required for expenditures.

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

Summary of Substitute Bill: The mandate of regional fisheries enhancement groups is broadened to include steelhead. A surcharge of \$1 is added to the purchase of a steelhead license and a surcharge of \$25 dollars is added to the purchase of fishing guide licenses and to anadromous game fish buyers' licenses. A regional fisheries enhancement salmonid recovery account is created. Revenues from the \$1 and \$25 surcharges are to be deposited into this account. In addition, the account is authorized to receive unidentified state and federal funds. The account is dedicated for the purposes of fishery enhancement and habitat restoration by regional fisheries enhancement groups. The account is subject to legislative appropriation.

The Regional Fisheries Enhancement Group Advisory board is to 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.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The original bill included a provision establishing a habitat incentive program administered by the Department of Fish and Wildlife. The substitute bill deletes this provision. The substitute bill also lowers the surcharge on salmon guide licenses and anadromous game fish buyers' licenses from \$100 to \$25 and specifies that the salmonid recovery account is subject to legislative appropriation.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: Regional fisheries enhancement groups provide cost-effective salmon restoration work. The enhancement groups have surveyed many user groups and have found that there is a great deal of support for adding a \$1 surcharge on steelhead licenses. Enhancement groups can do a great deal to improve steelhead habitat and production. Salmon guides and anadromous game fish buyers have been contacted and support a \$25 license surcharge. This bill will help the state to respond to impending Endangered Species Act listings for salmon and steelhead. The surcharges will benefit those who pay the surcharge. The advisory board has determined that a study is necessary to evaluate ways to streamline existing local, state, and federal

permitting requirements. A habitat incentive program will benefit landowners and anadromous fish.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Tim Adderson, Mid Sound Enhancement Group and Puget Sound Anglers; Lawrence Oathout, South Puget Sound Salmon Enhancement Group; Steve Jenks, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife; Ric Abbett, Trout Unlimited; Geoff Lebor, RFEG Advisory Board; and Ted Bottiger, Washington Association of Conservation Districts (all in favor).