

HOUSE BILL REPORT

2SSB 5886

As Passed House-Amended:

April 17, 1997

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].

Floor Activity:

Passed House-Amended: 4/17/97, 97-0.

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

A regional fisheries enhancement salmonid project 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.

The Department of Fish and Wildlife is authorized to provide startup funds to regional fisheries enhancement groups to initiate restoration projects.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: 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).