

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1716

As Reported By House Committee On:

Natural Resources

Appropriations

Title: An act relating to warm water fish culture.

Brief Description: Authorizing funding for the warm water fish culture project at Ringold.

Sponsors: Representatives G. Chandler, Doumit, Mastin, Mulliken and Grant.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Natural Resources: 2/16/99, 3/2/99 [DPS];

Appropriations: 3/5/99, 3/6/99 [DP2S(w/o sub NR)].

Brief Summary of Second Substitute Bill

- Allows the Department of Fish and Wildlife to use \$91,000 from the warm water game fish account for the Rod Meseberg warm water fish production facility.
- Requires the Department of Fish and Wildlife to deposit \$1,250,000 into the warm water game fish account for two years, until information from surveys of warm water game fishers are completed.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 11 members: Representatives Buck, Republican Co-Chair; Regala, Democratic Co-Chair; Anderson, Democratic Vice Chair; Sump, Republican Vice Chair; G. Chandler; Clements; Eickmeyer; Ericksen; Pennington; Rockefeller and Stensen.

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

Staff: Josh Weiss (786-7129).

Background:

Warm water game fish in Washington include the sunfish, pike, catfish, and perch families. A 1986 survey concluded that more than half of Washington fishing license holders fished for warm water species. The amount of recreation provided by warm water species in 1986 was second only to trout fishing in lowland lakes, and ahead of steelhead and salmon angling.

The warm water game fish enhancement program was created in 1996 within the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. The program was originally funded through a \$5 license surcharge that is required to fish for bass, walleye, channel catfish, tiger musky and crappie. This revenue was to be used exclusively to increase opportunities to fish for warm water game fish and not to be used to replace funding for these programs. In 1998, the Legislature revised the Department of Fish and Wildlife licensing structure, eliminating all surcharges.

Currently, funds equal to 6.512 percent of the total funds received from the sale of freshwater and freshwater, saltwater, and shellfish combination licenses are deposited into the warm water game fish account. This percentage is adjusted annually to reflect the actual number of warm water game fish license holders, which is determined by survey.

Current statute requires that money from the warm water game fish account not be used for the operation or construction of the warm water fish culture project at Ringold. In addition, the statute requires that funds from the sale of the warm water game fish surcharges are to be deposited into the warm water game fish account.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

Changes the name of the Ringold warm water facility to the Rod Meseberg warm water fish production facility. Allows an amount from the warm water game fish account not to exceed \$91,000 to be used for warm water fish culture at the Rod Meseberg warm water fish production facility, for the current biennium. Strikes language requiring that funds from the sale of the warm water game fish surcharges be deposited into the warm water game fish account.

Requires that the Department of Fish and Wildlife deposit \$1,250,000 into the warm water game fish account, as opposed to a number equivalent to 6.512 percent of the funds received from the sale of each freshwater license and each freshwater, saltwater, and shellfish combination license. Requires that the department deposit an additional amount which is adjusted on an annual basis according to a yearly survey of fishers. Requires that the department conduct an initial survey in April 1999 as opposed to April 2000. An emergency clause is also provided.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The substitute bill requires that the Department of Fish and Wildlife deposit \$1,250,000 into the warm water game fish account, as opposed to a number equivalent to 6.512 percent of the funds received from the sale of each freshwater license and each freshwater, saltwater, and shellfish combination license. The substitute also requires that the department deposit an additional amount which is adjusted on an annual basis according to a yearly survey of fishers. In the substitute, the department is required to conduct an initial survey in April 1999 as opposed to April 2000. An emergency clause is also provided in the substitute bill.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on March 1, 1999.

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

Testimony For: (Original bill) Warm water fishing is not getting the attention it deserves. This could be a recreational replacement for salmon fishing, which is on the decline. There are no native steelhead or salmon species in Grant County. This is the fastest growing recreational fishing segment in Washington, with over 22,000 licenses sold last year. This generated \$725 million last year. We need operation and maintenance money for the Ringold facility. This money will be matched from other sources. Support this bill for our kids. The number of licenses has continually gone down. People won't go out and fish if they can't catch any fish. There is a long history here of trying to obtain a warm water fish rearing facility. There was never any money directly appropriated to construct Ringold. Construction was completed about a year ago. Lots of the warm water game fish account has been used to purchase fish for planting. The current idea is to redistribute current funds within the department in the sum of \$91,000, along with a \$91,000 general fund appropriation, in addition to the \$91,000 in this bill. This money would last for one biennium and is a one-time shuffling of funds.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: (Original bill) Representative Gary Chandler, prime sponsor; Ron Sawyer, Central Washington Fish Advisory Committee; Frank Urabeck, Northwest Marine Trade Association; Jim Owens, Washington Bass Federation; and Bruce Crawford and Bill Zook, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Majority Report: The second substitute bill be substituted therefor and the second substitute bill do pass and do not pass the substitute bill by Committee on Natural Resources. Signed by 31 members: Representatives Huff, Republican Co-Chair; H. Sommers, Democratic Co-Chair; Alexander, Republican Vice Chair; Doumit, Democratic Vice Chair; D. Schmidt, Republican Vice Chair; Barlean; Benson; Boldt; Carlson; Clements; Cody; Crouse; Gombosky; Grant; Kagi; Keiser; Kenney; Lambert; Linville; Lisk; Mastin; McIntire; McMorris; Mulliken; Parlette; Regala; Rockefeller; Ruderman; Sullivan; Tokuda and Wensman.

Staff: Jeff Olsen (786-7157).

Summary of Recommendation of Committee on Appropriations Compared to Recommendation of Committee on Natural Resources: If funding for the bill is not provided by June 30, 1999, in the omnibus appropriations act, the bill is null and void.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on March 1, 1999.

Effective Date of Second Substitute Bill: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately. However, the bill is null and void unless funded in the budget.

Testimony For: (Substitute bill) Funds for the warm water account used to come from a specific warm water license. When licenses were consolidated last year, surcharges were incorporated into either the new saltwater or freshwater license. The \$1,250,000 represents the amount of funding that should be deposited in the account based on last year's warm water license sales. In addition to the \$91,000 of warm water fish account moneys, the Department of Fish and Wildlife has reprioritized \$91,000 in wildlife fund moneys for the warm water fish program.

Testimony against: None.

Testified: Representative Gary Chandler, prime sponsor; and Bruce Crawford, Department of Fish and Wildlife.