

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5104

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Natural Resources, Parks & Recreation, March 3, 1999

Title: An act relating to catch and release recreational fisheries.

Brief Description: Providing parameters for a catch and release steelhead fishery.

Sponsors: Senators Haugen, Swecker, Spanel and Fraser.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Natural Resources, Parks & Recreation: 2/18/99, 3/3/99 [DPS].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES, PARKS & RECREATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5104 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Jacobsen, Chair; Hargrove, Morton, Snyder and Spanel.

Staff: Ross Antipa (786-7413)

Background: The Fish and Wildlife Commission has established catch and release fisheries for steelhead trout in certain state waters. There is no statutory framework to guide the commission in the regulation of steelhead catch and release fisheries.

Concern exists that proper management of catch and release fisheries is needed to ensure that steelhead stocks are not harmed by catch and release fisheries.

Summary of Bill: The Fish and Wildlife Commission must not authorize steelhead catch and release fisheries in cases where there is insufficient enforcement staffing to assure that there is a low steelhead mortality rate. The commission must assess the threat to steelhead trout that occurs in catch and release fisheries while spawning fish are present. A steelhead catch and release mortality study must be conducted to assess rates of mortality, including situations where fisheries are conducted in warm water conditions.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: Statutory requirements for specific Fish and Wildlife Commission actions prior to authorizing any steelhead catch and release fisheries are removed. Special fees for catch and release fisheries are deleted. Fishers are not restricted in the number of days per week they can fish or in the number of steelhead they can catch and release per day. Prohibition on the fishing for spawning steelhead is removed. Poaching penalties are not changed. The angler education program is no longer included.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 8, 1999.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: Steelhead catch and release fisheries may result in excessive steelhead mortality unless they are correctly regulated and sufficient enforcement is present.

Testimony Against: Steelhead populations are healthy under catch and release regulations and no further changes are needed. Less problems occur with excessive steelhead mortality in catch and release fisheries than in catch and keep fisheries.

Testified: PRO: Don A. Cullen, Bill Reinard, Wildcat Steelhead Club; Wes Hoppler, Steelhead Trout Club of WA; CON: Vaughn Thomas; Jim Spainhower. Evergreen Fly Fishing Club; John Clark, Puget Sound Fly Fish; Roy Morris, Olympic Peninsula Flyfishers; Howard Johnson, FFF Steelhead Committee; Todd Ripley; Clair Loilley; Gary Kellogg, South Sound Fly Fishers; Robert Shirley, WA State Council Fed. Flyfishers; Mike Croft; John Segerson, South Sound Fly Fishers; Chris Bellows; Jack deYonge, WA Environmental Council; Myron Saikewicz, WA State Council Federation of Fly Fishers.